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Son of the whiteman

SON OF THE WHITEMAN

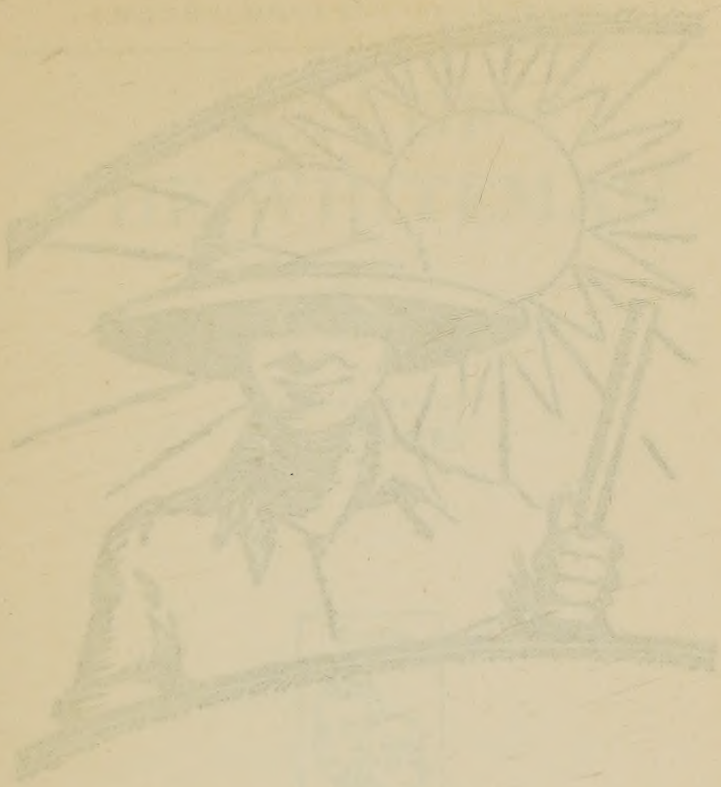
BOOKS BY

HERBERT BEST

Garram the Chief

Garram the Hunter

Son of the Whiteman



NEVER BEFORE HAD THESE PEOPLE HEARD A WHITEMAN SPEAK THEIR SPEECH. NEVER BEFORE HAD THEY SEEN A WHITE BOY.

YOUNG MODERNS BOOKSHELF

SON OF THE WHITEMAN

BY

HERBERT BEST

ILLUSTRATED BY

ERICK BERRY

THE SUN DIAL PRESS, INC.
NEW YORK

PRINTED AT THE *Country Life Press*, GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.

FROM

THE ARTIST AND THE AUTHOR

TO EACH OTHER

CL

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INTO A NEW COUNTRY

CHAPTER I

INTO A NEW COUNTRY

THE heat of the tropical day was lessening, but not much. Since three o'clock the red and dusty laterite track had been scorching. The waves of hot air that seemed to come out of the baked earth, and the glare of the sun on burnt grass and stubble on each side of the trail made the slow hours seem almost unendurable. Even now that the day had begun to cool Jerry

McLeod felt it could cool a lot more without doing any harm.

He swung along the narrow native track at a slow jog, rifle under his arm and sun-helmet well back on his head to keep the dangerous rays of the sun from his neck. He was not in the happiest possible frame of mind.

For nearly four years now Dad's work had taken him among the people of the West. Jerry's father was a District Officer of the white government that ruled this country of black people. There, for four years, Jerry had spoken the native language as he did English, had known their names and likes and dislikes as he did those of his own family. Even their goats and sheep, their mud, grass-thatched huts and their hens he had known, and he had been—as much as any white boy could hope to be—of some importance in the affairs of the native villages.

But this transfer of his father to a new part of the country meant learning the ways of a new lot of tribes. It was like being sent to a new school where you knew neither teachers nor boys, nor, even, the language . . . and didn't really care much.

Jerry mopped his tanned face and neck, lifting his helmet for a moment. Like a new school . . . yes! It wouldn't be long now before he would actually have to go to school. It would mean going Home. Home, a country where you had to wear collars and heavy clothes. Where nobody spoke anything but English. Where big-game shooting couldn't be got. Where you had to be rich to do any kind of shooting even. Gummy! What a country!

They had been trekking all morning, since daylight in fact. At midday they stopped for a while at a small rest house beside the road, ate lunch and rested. After lunch Jerry and Mother and Dad stretched out in long chairs in the little house and enjoyed the peace and the change from the brilliant heat outside. A coarsely woven straw mat hung in the doorway, shutting out the glare from the interior. A monotonous and soothing call of pigeons came from the mango trees that edged the compound, mingling with the murmur of the "boys," the native servants, as they cleaned up dishes back of the house.

Shol, Jerry's big sand-colored mongrel, stretched flat on the earth floor as though the

heat were too much even for him. He looked up gratefully as his master scooped water from a calabash holder and emptied his hands over the head of the panting dog.

Outside, since there was no room for them inside, stood a long row of all the McLeod family's possessions, a hundred and twenty carrier loads, each in a seventy-pound load so that a porter might carry it on his head. The native carriers also lay resting in the shade outside, to gather strength for the last few miles though the longest pull of the day.

They had been discussing—the three white people inside the hut—the possibilities of Mr. McLeod's new province. The last man in charge of it had been taken suddenly ill and ordered back to England. Mr. McLeod had had no time to learn any more about the people than that they were called the Zantas, and spoke, probably, a language which he did not understand. There might be further information waiting for him when they reached their new home tonight.

Seemingly all too soon the head carrier's whistle broke into its marching rhythm, the boys came in to bundle up the deck chairs, and they

were out in the blazing glare again. Jerry, dropping behind the marching carriers and the others' horses, took a shot at a roan antelope he saw in the bush. He missed it, then decided to send the horse on by a horseboy and do the last few miles on foot. It would be cooler than riding and he was more likely to get a shot at something.

The heat had dissolved all his natural, boy's

interest in the new place. Normally he would have loved the move, and probably soon would again, but now he felt cross at having missed a good shot, edgy at the continual crackle of burnt grass as it brushed his legs, and at the nettles and flies that stung his bare knees in their khaki shorts—thoroughly out of sorts, in fact, with the whole of Africa and his life there. Why didn't something exciting happen, he grumbled to himself. This was a stupid place for a boy!

Shol, appreciating his master's mood, appeared sunk in his own thoughts and covered the long miles with a listless lope that economized effort. His head was nearer the hot ground and he probably suffered more than Jerry; and anyhow it's no fun being a dog when the sun has wiped all the scents from the earth. The boy lifted his sun-helmet for a moment and stood still. Surely that was the evening breeze getting up! He felt a slight ruffle through his damp hair and decided that if he hurried he would be at the new house in time for a late tea. Shol seemed of the same mind. He stopped, and his lolling head rose to an attitude of awakening interest as he sniffed the air.

But, half a mile farther on, the track wound between tall, scattered rocks, which served to shut out the breeze and close in the heat. It was sweltering again. Just along here several tracks joined with the one they were following, each seeming well beaten with recent footmarks; but as all trails tended in the same general direction Jerry decided to keep on, not swing back. The others undoubtedly led to tiny villages hidden a short distance back in the bush.

Then a little farther on came a real problem. The trail widened and forked, and each of its two branches appeared to be as recently and as well trodden as the other. He stood wondering which one the carriers had taken. Shol, too, seemed undecided. Were those the tracks of their own horses, or had they been made by some chief who had ridden past here today? The dog sniffed about, but all scents had been obliterated by trekking villagers, whose bare feet had marked the dust.

Jerry considered. He could, of course, go back, trail up a small bush path to a village, and ask. But the sun was getting low and this would

mean time lost, even if he could make himself understood in this strange country.

"Come on, old man." He turned to Shol. "We'll take the right-hand fork and trust to luck!"

Once more they settled down to their stride. It would be bad, of course, if they were on the wrong road, but anything seems better than going back over the ground you have already covered.

"There ought to be a chance to ask somebody soon," thought Jerry. "Surely, from the number of footprints, this place leads to a big village."

Then it seemed almost as though his wish for a guide had conjured up an answer. Round a bend of the twisting path, not twenty yards ahead, came a small boy carrying a load of freshly cut grass on his head. To Jerry he looked exactly like the people of the country he had just come from, with the black leather loincloth and the shining, wet water bottle—the usual gourd, slung on a leather thong over one black shoulder. Jerry noticed particularly and with surprise a band of bleached palm leaf worn around the calf of each leg, like a garter—surprise, because each

A small boy carrying a load of grass on his head.

African tribe is as different from the next as any two European peoples are. The armlet knife he wore, too, was similar. This was the first of the Zanta people Jerry had seen and he was naturally curious and open to new impressions.

The boy came on and was not more than five yards away. He hadn't seen Jerry because of the overhanging grass on his head. At a loss what tongue to use, the white boy started to speak in the one most familiar to him. But what he said was drowned in a yell of fright as the startled boy dropped the green load at Jerry's feet and dived for the bush.

Jerry giggled, and Shol, for the first time that afternoon, opened his mouth in a huge, doggy laugh. They both felt better after that.

"O thou!" Jerry turned and hailed the expanse of empty bush where the other had disappeared. "O thou! Do not fear—we do not eat little black boys, my dog and I!" He waited and listened, but a faint and distant crashing of boughs and crackling of underbrush showed that the owner of the grass was heading due south and still going.

Jerry prodded the abandoned bundle with his

toe, but there was nothing to be learnt from that. Still slightly amused he shifted his rifle to the other arm and took up the trail again. The sun was below the horizon and it was really almost dusk now. The darkness didn't worry him, since he had often found his way by feeling with his feet along the hollowed-out native paths; but he'd rather have liked to shoot something before the light was completely gone. It might come in handy for tomorrow's breakfast in the new place.

Again the wish seemed to bring its fulfilment. A guinea fowl, a dark, scuttling little bird, came out of the thick undergrowth at the side of the track, hesitated, and made as though to turn back. Jerry's rifle snapped to his shoulder, and at the slight crack of the .22 the bird spun around, flapped a moment and dropped. Swiftly Shol retrieved it.

Jerry looked at it in the dusk, then looked at Shol. "Not so good, old man. What are we going to do about this? It's a perfectly good tame hen!"

Shol seemed to take it as a joke, and perhaps it was—but not on Shol. Jerry produced a piece of string from among the various odds and ends

that cluttered his capacious pockets. His mother had described his shorts as "pockets with a little clothes to hold them on." This was the sort of emergency in which their contents came in handy. With the deftness of long practice he made a loop around his belt, into which he slipped the hen's head.

The next thing was to find the owner and try to make amends. Jerry again explored his pockets and found a few coins which he thought might do the trick. When he found the owner he could also make enquiries as to whether his father and mother had passed that way with their carriers.

Of course, the owner of the hen might live in the last village he had passed, but that was some distance back. More likely the bird belonged to somebody in the village ahead of him. As he went forward he realized that the town was quite near now, for from somewhere in front came the beat of drums, those drums that in Africa are so seldom silent. Not very far ahead either, though the thick vegetation had damped out the sound till it was barely audible. The starshine was all he had to go by now. The path

ran for a way between abandoned cornfields full of stubble. Shol, spying out the land with ears and nose, stalked a few yards ahead. Then Jerry's nose, too, gave him information. On the evening air came the unmistakable odor of cooking fires, distinct from the smell of burning wood.

Some goats bleated plaintively, and a dog barked, at which Shol gave a low growl in his throat. Jerry came into the shadow of something, perhaps a wall, and then nearly bumped his nose against a hut. Here the path was worn very deep, as it always is nearer a village, and his feet guided him as though he stepped along a hard earthen trough.

Except for the drums, now very distinct and near at hand, there was a strange silence, a feeling of desertedness. No voices chattered in the darkness, no lights flashed from open hut doorways. The breeze had died with the dying light so that the smell of smoke still hung heavy on the air. In one open doorway he spied some glowing embers, but there was nothing else to show that the place had lately been inhabited . . . except the drums. And now even they

ceased their sound. Shol growled again and Jerry felt his spine prickle slightly, though goodness knows he was used enough to native villages in both dark and daylight.

His best hope of getting information lay in making his way towards where the drums had sounded, probably the central market-place, for all villages center about a market. He halted for a moment to consider and noted a group of stars which might serve as guide. The path exasperatingly turned off to one side. He decided not to swing from his course till he found the way actually closed in front of him. Cautiously he moved forward. Above him and faintly visible in the darkness was the conical grass roof of a native hut. His hand touched the rough feel of a mud wall, and the smell of goats came to him through the open doorway.

Swinging to the right he felt his way along a rustly fence made of eight-foot-high stalks of *dawa,* corn. Then another hut, and so on to the same track again, which here swung back as though, not having defeated him, it had decided to be again of assistance.

It was a relief to feel the path underfoot again,

for at least paths don't lead down wells or anything like that. He was cross and tired and hungry by now, and wished to goodness he had never left the road nor shot the black hen. Most of all he was cross with these new people, these Zantas. He was certainly fed up with having to leave his own friendly tribe, and country where he knew every road, or where anyhow he would long before this have met someone to guide him. Then he stumbled over a sheep lying bang in the middle of the path, and decided to make his thoughts stick to the job in hand. Shol had dropped behind, leaving his master to lead the way; he was puzzled enough about the whole business.

Just as Jerry was beginning to feel that he had covered miles, the path gave a sudden flirt of its tail, and out of the darkness ahead shone a flickering, reddish glow, throwing hut roofs into silhouette and lighting up the undersides of two huge trees. The trees gave him the clue he wanted: they would be the usual ones under which people idled in the market-place.

Then the subdued hum of a packed throng of

people came to his ears, the noise of spectators trying to be quiet. Shol stuck close to heel.

Something was happening here. The boy quickened his pace and broke into a trot. It must be something especially exciting to have drawn the whole village from their huts in this way, leaving even their household pots at the mercy of thieves.

Passing a few small boys who edged the crowd, and whose attention was on getting through it themselves, Jerry made his way quite unnoticed. He was just another boy, and the outskirts were too poorly lighted to show up the color of his skin. He felt thrilled. This was something like—well, like what he imagined a circus must be! Thrilling, though you didn't know what was going to happen. He had slipped his sun-helmet off his head and it now hung by the strap at the back of his neck. In the dim light it might have been just a native water bottle on his shoulders.

The crowd was packed tightly, straining forward to hear. Somewhere in the center a man's voice sounded, but Jerry couldn't catch the words, even if he had expected to understand

them. A broad baobab tree near the center of the proceedings interfered with the view of any who might be behind it, so back of its wide trunk was a narrow lane where no one stood. Unmolested, Jerry got as far as the tree. He could now hear the voice but could still see nothing of importance. People were jammed too tightly for him to circle around to one side or the other, but he wondered whether—if he couldn't get around—he might not get over! The lower branches of the tree were broad and spreading, and not more than ten feet from the ground.

Shol had followed close, and Jerry threw him a muttered order to stand by the tree trunk. Then, slinging his rifle on his back, the boy stepped swiftly on Shol, which gave him an extra start, and he scrambled rapidly up the smooth, knobby bark. Here was a "royal box" indeed. Turning back he motioned Shol to lie down, then settled himself comfortably against a branch and dangled his legs unnoticed above the heads of the assembly.

Below him were three old fires, their brightly glowing embers furnishing the needed illumination. From where he perched he could feel their

heat. In the clear triangle between the fires was the big drum, a hollowed log, now silent. But what caught his attention was an old woman squatting on the ground, her body bent almost to the dust, while before her a man stood speaking with many gestures.

THE WITCH'S HEN

CHAPTER II
THE WITCH'S HEN

ONE thing was quite obvious to Jerry: the man was accusing the woman of something. Every gesture held accusation, recrimination. As he paused, arm thrown up, body thrown back, making a point in his remarks, the huddled bundle of rags and bony flesh at his feet raised its head, then sank again into hopelessness.

The woman's back was close to one of the

three fires—so close, thought Jerry, that it must be uncomfortable. In front of her the figure of her accuser, gleaming red in the glow, took another pose as he continued his oration. Behind him, in a line between the two other fires and forming as it were the base of the triangle, were seated a row of the Elders of the tribe, men of age and authority in the village. Jerry knew the type, since almost all these hamlets were ruled in a similar fashion. A respectful distance separated them from the crowd. It was a striking scene, and to the white boy in the tree there was something familiar about it, something terrible. Then he remembered, a dim memory of some story he had read, of wolves crouched beyond a fire, waiting, waiting to kill. As the speaker made an emphatic point there came another growl from the people outside the triangle of fire. This was perhaps what had given him the impression of crouching wolves. Then something still more exciting struck him. He pricked up his ears and listened acutely.

Was he awake? Did he really understand what the people were saying?

"And are further members of the tribe to die at the hand of this witch?"

This time he got it all, as the orator faced him. The words were strange to his ears, it is true, because of the softened *r*'s that sounded like *l*'s, and the tone was more singsongy too. But otherwise it was the language he had heard most recently and knew best of all his fair stock of African tongues. Happily thrilled, he patted his knees gently with clenched fists, and listened further. Yes, there was no mistake. He got most of the phrases, missing only a word now and then.

An old man, striking in appearance even as he crouched at the center of the Elders, spoke:

"Three times now you have told of the crime with which you charge her." The deep voice boomed like another drum. "But still are needed witnesses. Moreover, why should you, O Giba, bring this charge against the wife of your father, unless in the hope of inheriting her goods and her goats? You are related to the accused—not to the accusers!"

Then Giba, who was evidently the orator in front of the old woman, took up his tale again.

But the elder, who seemed to be a person of considerable authority, cut him short with a wave of one hand. "All this we have heard before. Bring forward now your witnesses."

Into the triangle slunk a wizened little man who cringed grotesquely before the row of Elders.

"What Giba says is true, for it is I who saw," he whimpered. "It was a dark night, as you remember, three nights ago, and this woman crept before the door of Lado, who died but the next day. He was not ill then. She did not see me, for it was very dark, but at the door she killed the black hen, wringing its neck in silence. Then she drew from it a feather and placed it above the doorway. It was too dark to see her face," the cracked voice continued. "But I, who had been awake with an aching tooth, I followed her. When she left the village going by the path to the west, I knew it was she indeed, for who lives alone in the thick bush to the west save this woman? All decent men"—with unction he said it —"live as we do, within the village. Then with fear, for I knew her evil ways, I followed her. When she came to her hut I saw her face by

the clear light of her fire and was sure. Then the fire was blackened as she cast her hen upon it."

There was a moment's tense silence. Then the owner of the deep voice broached another question:

"It was so dark that you could not see her face. How then did you see the feather that was plucked from the hen and put above the doorway?"

"O master, the gods, hating her ill deeds, caused the moon to shine for a brief space."

"M . . m . . m!" The questioner seemed unsatisfied. "How then, when the moon came out, did she not see you?"

"O master, knowing it would come out, I hid behind the house."

As for the feather from the black hen, all those present (including Jerry) knew that a feather from a black hen, planted with certain incantations above the doorway of a hut, would bring evil to the family within—evil, and even death.

But the questioner continued: "If then you were in hiding, how is it that you saw the feather?" He pressed his point.

"O master, first I saw the feather, then I hid."

The feeling of the assembly seemed to swing in favor of the accused. Jerry felt it clearly, as one can feel the temper of a crowd. So did the orator, for again he spread his chest and asked leave to speak.

"If further evidence is lacking. . . ."

"Gosh!" thought the boy to himself. "It surely *is!*"

". . . then let this woman be asked what has become of her black hen with the . . ." Here Jerry lost the words. It sounded like "red" something, but he wasn't sure.

The crouching figure on the ground came to life a little. "O people, it is true!" she quavered. "I no longer have the hen. My beautiful hen with the . . ." Jerry nearly caught it this time, but the woman mumbled indistinctly.

"But the foolish one went off to lay eggs a week ago. Wait but a little while and she will return, my beautiful hen."

The crowd stirred, and a low ripple of laughter flew around it. But the boy in the tree felt sorry for the old thing.

The elder hesitated a brief space, then asked, "Do all of you know this black hen with the—" Here Jerry caught the phrase distinctly, since the drum-like voice was directed towards him and the accent was not so strong, "—with one red leg and one black one?"

There was a deep murmur of assent from the assembly, a murmur like a growl. Sympathy, briefly with the woman, had again swung against her.

But Jerry in the tree was shaking with excitement. "A black hen with one red leg and one black one!" He felt in his belt and, balancing there, perilously over the throng, he brought it around so he could see fully in the firelight the bird he had shot that afternoon. It stuck stiffly from his side and showed plain in the flickering glow. One black leg and one red! He gave a yell of warning to the people below, then jumped.

It was no great drop, but it furnished a sufficiently spectacular entrance and was actually the only way open for him to the triangle of fires. Somehow Shol had worked his way through unnoticed and stood beside his master.

With as much dramatic effect as a tousled,

hungry white boy, in shorts and a bush shirt, could summon up, he strode full into the light of the fires. Straight to the elder with the deep voice he made his way. Then, with full ceremonial observance, imitating the singsong sentences and speaking as slowly and clearly as he could, as one does in a foreign tongue, he greeted this man in authority, then the Elders, then the people.

"O people, I salute you!" he finished.

The strained silence of held breaths surrounded him. Never before had these people heard a Whiteman speak their speech. Never before had they seen a white boy. Surely never before had been such a startling entrance, by one at night, alone and unguarded.

Carefully and slowly Jerry spoke again.

"I have listened," he said. "Is it true that this woman is called a witch for having killed her black hen with one black and one red leg, before somebody's door?"

There was again a murmur of astonishment that he spoke their own language. The Elders had risen, all save the great one with the voice like a

drum. He alone remained as he had been. He leaned forward now and spoke, slowly, in answer to the question.

"So indeed says that man behind you." He nodded toward the orator.

Jerry turned to the man named Giba. "And how long ago was this?" he asked.

"But two days ago," he replied glibly, almost aggressively.

"Then," said Jerry, feeling at his belt, "what hen is this that I shot this evening?"

With a regal gesture in no way diminished by the grubbiness of the hand that held it, he swept the black hen aloft, so that all might see it in full firelight.

The crowd was silent a moment as the meaning of the object sank in. Only the old woman came to life. She let out a long wail, whether of relief, or of grief for her cherished pet, one could not say, but she clutched toward the fowl.

"I entered your village only to seek the owner of this hen, which in the dark and with foolishness I shot, thinking it a guinea fowl," Jerry continued slowly that all might hear. "Now that the owner is found, there remains only the matter

of the compensation to be paid. What is the hen worth to you, old mother?" he asked.

"Though the hen is dead, have you not saved the life of its owner?" asked the elder, and a gleam of wrath shone in his eyes as he turned to the accuser and the witness. "These two," he directed, "let them be driven from the village. We have no place for such as these."

Jerry reached into his pocket to search for the coins.

So it happened that late that night a long string of horses wound up the road towards Jerry's new home. As the riders dismounted and came up

So that all might

see it in the full fire light—

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the path towards the house, Jerry's father turned to his mother.

"Jerry seems to be bringing home a whole tribe as a pet this time," he remarked dryly. "But I told you he'd get here all right. Last time he brought a leopard. Thank heaven, it's not an elephant!"

Jerry was the first to reach the veranda, flushed and thrilled. "Oh, Dad!" he cried breathlessly and all at once. "This place is just great I want you to know Mgok the High Priest and say Mother can I have some dinner?"

THE RIFLE

CHAPTER III

THE RIFLE

JERRY had been at the McLeods' new home for a month now. The keenness with which he explored the neighborhood had begun to lessen. The few tools he possessed had been at last unpacked, and he had set up a sort of workshop.

This morning he was busily engaged in fitting a curiously shaped stock, when the doorway darkened and he looked up from the rough car-

penter's bench. But it was only Shol wandering in. The boy grunted a welcome absent-mindedly, and the dog went over to curl up on a pile of shavings. Jerry continued with the trimming.

Just as, in another country, Jerry might have been the family radio repairer, he was, in Africa, the family gunsmith. His best job had been on a Browning .320 automatic rifle that had jammed —a splendid weapon, though its low velocity made it difficult to shoot with in open country, as ranging had to be super-accurate. Jerry had had to invent a new tool in order to take the rifle apart to clean it, or it would have become useless with a corroded barrel.

His present job was a puzzle, even to Shol, who had seen more rifles than most men have. The basis had been a .410 shot-gun, which had belonged to Jerry's mother until it developed a bulge in its choke barrel and became useless. Jerry had cut off the bulged muzzle, but it still wasn't much good, as it spread the charge too much. Now he was busy fitting it with a curious-looking stock made of solid native wood. And it certainly did look strange. The stock curved up and back over the top of the barrels, and the end

finished off nearly two feet in front of the muzzle!

If a man wanted a particularly clumsy stock to a gun, so that he could fire over his ear into something behind him, this might do the trick. But even so, it would need turning upside down and would almost certainly carry away his ear! Shol grunted his disgust, gave a sigh that blew a little cloud of dust off the door, and settled down to sleep till something more exciting should happen.

As the boy worked he thought longingly of that .320 automatic which his father never used now. It hadn't any more kick than his own little .22 rook rifle, the recoil being used to eject and reload. Dad might let him use it now and then. He'd often held it in his hand, swinging it to his shoulder in loving practice, run his hand along the dark, polished walnut of its stock, and tried it in every position possible for a man to carry a gun in. It wasn't too heavy, even if he weren't full-grown.

Dusk came at about the time Jerry finished, to his own satisfaction, the fitting of the stock.

He gave it a final brush with his shirt-sleeve. Nothing fancy here, but—he grinned to himself—it might do the trick at that. He rose and went to the doorway of the hut, and Shol got up with a sigh. The boy stood looking out for a long minute; then, satisfied that no one was about, he picked up a coil of native rope and the firearm, and went out into the dusk, past the "boys' " houses, the grooms' quarters and the stables, and slipped noiselessly through the compound wall by the small gate used as a servants' entrance. Shol, puzzled but interested, trotted as silently at his heels.

He was not gone more than an hour. In fact, when he returned it was only eight o'clock, the hour when the family dined. Jerry and Dad and Mother were seated at the table together, the two male members of the family in clean white linen suits, Mrs. McLeod in a cool evening dress. The punkah waved slowly overhead and stirred the flames of the candle lamps slightly in its draft. Native servant boys in white jackets and scarlet sashes came silently into the soft glow of the shaded lamps and as silently disappeared into the darkness with used plates and dishes.

Over coffee Jerry's father turned to the head-boy. "Oh, Garuba, put out my shooting khaki and rubber-soled shoes. I go shooting tonight." Then he turned to Jerry. "There has been a hyena or something worrying the village. Quite a lot of goats have been killed, and I am going to sit up and wait for the thing, whatever it is, with the elephant rifle."

Jerry looked politely interested. "Any chance of my coming along?" he asked.

"Sorry, Jerry, but the fewer people the better, as there is less sound and scent. And anyway, it may take me most of the night. You need your sleep, young man."

"Um . . ." said Jerry. Somehow his voice didn't sound so disappointed as it might have. His father looked up sharply and decided to have the heavier rifles locked up for the night so that the temptation should not be too much for his son.

But Jerry went to bed without protest. Since he was often up before dawn, bed was not an unpleasant thing. He slept lightly for many hours, then some time not long before dawn came a faint report. It was not the report of the

elephant gun, but it might have been both barrels of the .410 going off together. Jerry had sat up in bed at the sound, but now he lay back and went to sleep, on his face a particularly pleased smile that might almost have been called a smirk!

When he woke next time dawn had come, but the sun was not yet up. The air smelt cool and green and full of pleasant, inviting scents, and the boy slipped into shirt and shorts and went out to the veranda. There his father was having early morning tea and biscuits, the first meal of the day all over tropical Africa. He said he had just bathed after having been up all night.

Jerry munched a biscuit and poured himself a cup of the weak, hot liquid. "What luck, Dad?" he asked.

"Oh, hum!" Jerry senior stretched hugely and yawned mightily. "Rotten luck, son. I feel more like going to bed than starting a day's work," and he pulled the fly cover over the plate of biscuits. "It's not so bad when you get anything for your labor, but when you sit up all night, trying not to move or make a sound and not daring to smoke, and see nothing at all the whole night,

you begin to wish you'd had the sense to stay home and go to bed instead."

Jerry grinned in sympathy.

"I lay up in a small path of grass along that track that leads from the south hill to the village. You know—just where the trading track crosses it. Hyenas usually keep to the trails as much as possible."

"But the natives say it's no use hunting hyena if you've got any cooked food in your stomach," Jerry pointed out. "They say the animal has a special kind of eyes that can see the light of the cooking fire shining inside you!"

"That sounds as good an explanation as any! At all events, I saw and heard nothing till the moon went down, and then there was no point in waiting longer. After that there was an awful hubbub in the village. I went to see what it was about, and that's where I've been ever since. A hyena or something had broken through the *zana* mat in front of a hut door and nearly killed an old woman. It had tried to drag her off. It was driven away, but couldn't be seen in the darkness. Then, since it left no tracks on the

hard-baked clay or the rock, the villagers swear it is a ghost hyena."

"The villagers probably blotted out its tracks when they chased it, don't you think?" Jerry suggested, "and then thought to look for them afterwards. The animal simply *must* have left some trace in the dust of the street."

Jerry senior lighted his pipe and puffed contentedly a while. "Probably you are right," he agreed. "I don't think they looked for his tracks till they had chased him up to the rocks and lost sight of him."

"Was the woman killed?"

"No. She'll be all right. I've been fixing her up ever since." Jerry's father smiled at the recollection. "She's a tough old hen, and spent the whole time telling her menfolk what rotten hunters they were to let the animal get away, and what cowards they are anyway. And when the dressings hurt her a little more she started on their grandfathers and great-grandfathers! Lucky I had one of the boys with me. I had to send him back after the medicine kit. She'll recover all right, though. But we've got to get the hyena some way or other. Any suggestions?"

Jerry considered. Overhead and a little distance off he saw vultures gathering and circling in the clear morning air. Then the shot he had heard in the night hadn't been a dream. And his father hadn't fired . . .

"*Baturi!* Whiteman!" A native came running breathlessly into the compound and threw himself down before them in the sunlight in salutation.

"Lord, we . . ." He struggled for breath, then said, "The killer by night—the leopard—we found his tracks again before dawn and followed. Come!"

In dressing-gown though he was, Jerry's father leaped for sun-helmet and rifle. "Take the .320 Browning, Jerry, for this once. All the others are greased up."

Shol appeared miraculously from nowhere, gave a sharp bark of delight at the sight of the rifles, then settled nose to ground in front of them as they started at a swift walk after the native guide.

Out into the early light they went, along the wide roadway, where bush fowls scattered clucking before the men and the big dog, and

the leaves shimmered a blue reflection of the sky overhead. Beyond them the vultures hovered, and like the native guide seemed to be showing them the way. They had not far to go along this path, not a quarter of a mile even. Close to a single deserted farm hut, of the dark red mud the natives used for building, the guide checked his pace. He showed them with his spear-point where huge pawmarks—leopard pawmarks—lay in the dust about the hut, some overlaid by human footprints, but some clear and sharp and sinister, and evidently not more than a few hours old. They all pointed towards the hut, and from inside it came the bleating of a kid.

But the big dog was acting strangely. His attention was not on the hut. Cautiously he swung from side to side, edging towards the thick bush, drawing gradually nearer. Then his nose left the ground and sought higher in the air for the body scent.

The party of three stopped and waited for such sign as Shol might give. Suddenly he gave it.

With hackles raised he stood his ground for

a moment growling, then with flattened ears and tail moved cautiously backward!

"Leopard it is!" whispered Jerry.

His father nodded, but pointed upwards at the heavy, circling birds. The native noticed the pointing finger and nodded also. Vultures meant dead or dying game. The leopard must be lying up with his kill.

But Jerry had an idea of his own that might explain things, though it seemed almost too good to hope for. He made his way along the tracks of the leopard as they led to the hut. Yes, they led right up to the narrow doorway. It was a small, circular opening not two feet in diameter and set about three feet from the ground. The bleating of a goat still sounded from inside. But then, better still, the tracks of the leopard led away from the opening again, tearing up the ground as if in rage, and with heavy bloodstains about them.

Shol shrank back from the rank-smelling leopard blood, but Jerry and his father advanced towards the thicket. Abreast of each other, but ten paces apart, they walked, so that one or the other should be able to get a flank shot if the

animal charged. Their rifles were held hip-high in both hands and with safety catches off, ready for action.

Out of the corner of his eye Jerry could see that many natives had followed them to the spot, and now more and more were assembling behind those. The place seemed to bristle with spears, but this was the whiteman's hunt and the natives held back.

Suddenly Jerry's rifle leaped to his shoulder, followed in the same second by his father's. Finger taking the first pressure on the trigger, he held his fire.

Surely the huge form, not ten yards away, was stretched, ready to spring! There—at the edge of the bush! But it made no move. Was it dead? Jerry crept a yard to his left, but the low, heavy head did not swing to keep him in sight. The leopard was dead! Cautiously still, Jerry and his father went up to it, then lowered their rifles and slipped on the safety catches.

There was a wild rush of villagers now that all seemed over.

Then suddenly Jerry's rifle leaped to his shoulder and cracked twice—and not a split

second too soon. All unsuspected, the mate of the dead leopard had been watching from the edge of the bush. Shot in the act of springing, she rolled harmlessly, head over heels, showing the white under-fur of the belly, then lay as still as her mate not a yard from her.

Jerry's father had raised his rifle to cover her in case she was not dead, but she neither kicked nor moved.

"Good shot, Jerry! But how on earth does this other one come to be here dead?"

Jerry signed to the people to bring the great beast to the house for measurement before skinning. Then he turned and led the way to the small hut where the goat still bleated. It would be much easier for his father to see for himself than for Jerry to try to explain.

Inside all was dark and smelt of goat. But gradually, after Jerry and Dad had wormed their way through the hole and their eyes had become accustomed to the dimness, they could see the goat tethered in the corner, and, swinging from the roof, the curious-looking firearm that Jerry had made out of the old shotgun the day before.

It was quite safe now, since both barrels had been discharged. As Dad examined it Jerry explained a little.

"You see, I slung it from the roof, the barrels horizontal and the muzzle a foot from the door. Then I tied a string from the triggers to the back wall. The idea was to fasten raw meat to the curved-over stock so that it should hang just clear of the barrels, do you see? That was for the *hyena!*"

Jerry's father looked up from the weapon with interest. "So then you guessed it was a leopard, and not a hyena?"

"Yes. I'd seen these tracks the day before yesterday. That was what made the trap so difficult. A leopard might not take dead meat. So I had to hire the goat as a decoy. Then it was necessary to close the hut with a light framework of twigs which would set the gun off the moment that the leopard pushed it aside to get the goat."

His father gave a whistle of surprise and appreciation.

"A bit tricky getting the twigs into position without shooting yourself?" he asked anxiously.

"It was, rather. Because I had to load and

cock the gun and point it at the opening first."

Jerry had now taken down the trap and passed it to a villager outside to carry back for him. He untied and passed out the goat too, still struggling and bleating. They wormed their way through the small opening and out into the sun again.

Dad turned to Jerry. "Well, you've freed the country of two leopards that had tasted human blood and would have started to kill in earnest in a day or two. But don't lay any more gun traps!"

Jerry looked rather downcast.

"Use your .320 Browning instead."

The boy spun around in excitement. *"My* Browning?" he asked.

"Don't you think you've earned it?" asked his father dryly.

Jerry was too thrilled to note the ring of pride in his father's voice. "Gummy green Eliza!" he breathed softly. This was Jerry's most emphatic expletive, reserved for very special occasions—of which this was undoubtedly one!

THE CROCODILE POOL

CHAPTER IV

THE CROCODILE POOL

JERRY and Shol were wildly keen on shooting. The hopeful laying of plans, and consideration of wind and sun when they started out—the eager examination of tracks, scents, rustlings in the bush—the excitement of the careful stalk, or the snap shot—the pride of success when the game fell to the shot—even the hunger and thirst

that go with shooting in the tropics added to the thrill.

The new .320 Browning was now the pride of Jerry's waking moments. The stock gleamed with oil and polishing, and not a spot of dirt or fouling could have been found in even the most mysterious "innards" of the ejecting and reloading mechanism. Like all keen hunters Jerry prided himself on clean killing, and preferred to let game get away rather than try a long risky shot which would be more likely to wound than kill. But it's impossible to make quite certain, and sometimes game would only be wounded. That was where the new rifle was such an improvement. With its automatic action you could get in your second shot just as soon as you could bring the sights down again and press the trigger —before a wounded animal could begin to run, before it began to suffer.

Jerry loved the life he led, and the amount of adventure he managed to crowd into an average week would have worried his parents if they had known it. Since he had almost cut his first teeth on a rifle barrel, done his first traveling in a homemade basket on the head of a native

carrier, and learnt at least four native languages as early as he could speak English, he couldn't really distinguish between what was adventure and what wasn't. Adventures in books, when he found time to read them, didn't seem half so exciting as those he had himself.

But what really seemed like adventure to him was this plan that his father had mentioned again only the other day—the plan to send him Home to school. It would be exciting, yes. But Jerry wasn't sure that he quite liked the idea. It would mean that he would have to wear proper clothes instead of bush shirt and shorts. He would have to wear socks and a clean white shirt, as he did in the evenings now, all the time, and be called by his full name—which no one but Mother used out here. Jerry hated his name, Jeremiah. True, he had been named for a worthy Scotch grandfather, but he hated it just the same; and when the natives caught hold of it and began using it too—for it sounded long and pleasantly ponderous to them—Jerry disliked it more than ever. Generally the natives had a special name for whitemen; two names sometimes, if one of them was likely to annoy the whiteman and so

had to be kept for private talk only. Usually it was a word that took off their appearance, or their way of speaking, or again one that grew out of something that had happened to them. Jerry wanted a name like that, a name that he had earned for himself. Goodness knows, he had had enough adventures. But they still called him Jer-a-mi-ah.

This going to school, though. It wasn't going to be so fine an adventure as he had once hoped. Almost since he was born, he had known that his father wished to send him to the school that Dad, Dad's brother, Dad's father, and even his grandfather had gone to. He had seen the place on leave once, with its smoothly mown lawns, its tall elms, and ancient buildings; had even seen Dad's initials carved on an oak desk-lid exactly under those of Dad's own father. He wanted to carve his own there some day, and get caned for it exactly as Dad and Grandfather had been caned many years ago. Wanted, too, to get his name on those honors boards in Great Hall with its oak paneling and tall, cathedral-like windows. But the other day Dad had broken the bad news to him. There wouldn't be enough money,

after all, to send him there. He would have to go to some other school—possibly just as good and certainly more up to date. But it wouldn't be the same. Not an adventure, somehow. And Jerry liked adventures, and was used to them.

Mainly his adventures came because he understood, and because of that, liked the natives. Strange people became his friends. Grizzled, severe-faced ancients would greet him with solemn news of their villages. Hunter men would show him a trick to silence the twang of a bow, or what game ate certain wild fruits while other game avoided them. Naturally the native knew his own trade better than any strange whiteman could, and Jerry was willing to learn all he could. He admired them too for their ability to endure hardships which would have killed a whiteman, their kindness to children and animals, and above all for their undefeatable cheeriness.

But these were not his only friends. There were a couple of golden-crested cranes that followed him about the garden with their stately, strutting walk. There was a very tame leopard cub that he was trying to teach to retrieve to his

gun. Then he had a friend in the white foreman who was putting up the Langai bridge some twenty miles away. Sometimes his adventures came through his friends, sometimes they just happened as suddenly as a tropical storm. These were generally the best ones.

One adventure grew out of Jerry's desire to see the Sacred Crocodile of the Zantas. So very sacred was it that none of the Zanta tribe might see it except the Elders and the Chief Priest. And naturally no one outside the tribe had ever caught sight of it. Few people even knew that it existed.

Little by little he had narrowed the search down. There were places like the open bush where it obviously couldn't be. There were other places where he had already searched, or where he had hunted game and where no crocodile, sacred or otherwise, could be in hiding. One last place he thought it might be, and he was going there today—the Sacred Grove of the Zantas. This was a close forest of trees, strange because they rose up dark and thick in that country of dry brown grass and small scorched trees. But this grove had been preserved for generations,

and deep, leafy paths overhung by branches held the moisture and coolness the trees needed.

Jerry gave a last look around before he entered the path to be sure that no one was watching. Then he hurried forward along a narrow, grass-grown trail. He had at last entered the Sacred Grove. The thick, tangled wall of greenstuff before him parted gently as he passed along the path. Now it would seem impossible to go more than a few yards farther, yet his feet found the way, as countless Zanta feet must have passed before. He thought about the crocodile and wondered if he were on its trail at last.

Kado was its name. It was said to contain all the souls of all dead and living Zantas, and if the animal were killed, then the tribe would be left without a soul. This, too, would mean that the race would die out, since no more children could be born.

Every tribe has enemies and, if a tribe has a spot as vulnerable as this soul-repository of the Zantas, it has to be careful not to let any enemy get at it. That was what made the crocodile's hidden place the most secret of all secrets.

The thick wall of creeper and undergrowth

suddenly rose still thicker before him, and Jerry had to stoop and wriggle his way through it, hot and breathless, dripping with perspiration. It proved to be only a few yards wide, after all, and he emerged into the Sacred Grove. In front of him it stretched like a vast hall, the green roof high above supported by smooth, round pillars that were the trunks of living trees. The ground was level and bare of any bushes and covered with a moss-like growth that might have passed for a thick green carpet.

"Magnificent!" murmured Jerry to himself. This was another favorite exclamation of his, and it certainly fitted. "Magnificent!" he muttered again.

In the old days a stranger who entered this mysterious and holy place would have been punished by death. Even now, Jerry suspected, if he were caught by one of the tribe the consequences would be very unpleasant; and, too, it would certainly cost him his friendship with M'gok, the Chief Priest.

Turning his head this way and that, he listened for any crackling in the underbrush, any slight sound of voices; but for the moment all

seemed safe, and he walked forward. No one had ever been allowed to cut even a twig of the holy wood. Gradually the trees must have grown up, higher and higher, thicker and thicker, till the usual scrubby undergrowth had been stifled out of existence for lack of light.

It was very still here. Jerry heard none of the chirpings and twitterings that were usual in the bush, and he shifted his rifle to the crook of his arm, lifted his sun-helmet and mopped his face with the sleeve of his shirt. All was beautifully cool and dim after the glare of the African sun outside. It seemed strange to hear no sound of bird or insect or animal. The silence was mysterious, almost frightening. He felt as if the place had been waiting for centuries for something—something that in another moment might happen—something more dreadful than he could imagine. Jerry shivered. Then, as he walked along faster, the eerie feeling gradually left him and he began to think.

This mysterious crocodile now—what better place for hiding him than here? A happy grin overspread Jerry's face and he murmured

"Magnificent" again. "Magnificent!" There was probably only one beaten track through to the center of the grove, the one the Elders followed. No stranger would dare to go along it for fear of meeting them and being caught. And the dim, pathless grove was a maze through which a stranger could never thread his way.

It was a maze indeed. Jerry halted, defeated for a moment. The crocodile, if he were here, would be somewhere about the middle of it. But how could you tell where the middle lay? Was it dead ahead, or to the right, or the left? Again the path had vanished, and the ground underfoot was as smooth as the green surface of a billiard table. Each tree trunk looked exactly like the next; overhead, everywhere, was the same dark tangle of boughs. His perplexity was all the greater because he could not walk straight ahead; he had to go around so many trees, and he knew well the risk of traveling in a complete circle and so losing his way.

Just as the situation began to look hopeless, Jerry had an idea. He knew he had entered the grove from almost due east. He couldn't have gone far off his course during the short time he

had been inside. If he kept on walking due west he ought by luck to hit the center of the place. Crocodiles meant water, and water meant some sort of depression in the earth for it to lie in. So the way the ground sloped ought to be a clue, if he got anywhere near.

To walk due west, with nothing like sunlight to guide him, would have been impossible for a native. But out of his pocket Jerry drew white-man's magic, an old battered prismatic compass which his father had discarded as useless but which the boy had salvaged and repaired.

Opening the lid he pushed up the prism sight with his thumb, turned it till it came to rest with 270 degrees showing under his eye, and then looked along the sight.

"Magnificent!" he murmured to himself, and he fixed in his mind a distant tree trunk in the line of march. "Magnificent!"

The trunks were close and shut in the view, so it was only after twenty or more halts to re-sight his line of march with the compass that Jerry came to another wall of thick creepers and green leaves barring his way.

Anxiously he parted the mass and peered

through. It might be the other side of the grove he had come to, or it might. . . .

Then he almost let out a whoop of joy. In front was a small pool, black and deep and still, and as circular as though it had been made by hand. Green banks sloped gradually down to it. The trees stood away from the edge, but they were so tall that below them all was dim and green. And on the bank, near Jerry, there lay a long, green, shining, log-like thing, as though asleep—a twenty-foot crocodile!

Without anyone's help he had discovered the most carefully guarded secret of the Zantas—the crocodile which was considered the very life of the tribe, the crocodile on which was founded the dread secret society of the Zantas that few people dared even to mention by name!

For a time Jerry just knelt and looked at the beast. It was worth looking at. It lay sleeping with its mouth open, and its long jaws looked like two planks with rows of pegs set round their edges. But, as he looked, Jerry's restless mind began to search further. He couldn't shoot the thing. He couldn't even tell anyone the secret he had discovered, since the Zanta people were

friends of his, and their Chief Priest rather particularly so. But now he had the secret, wasn't there anything he *could* do with it, any way of turning it to account? Thrilling though the discovery had been, it didn't seem the proper end to the adventure. He pushed up his helmet and scratched his head with the foresight of his rifle. The scratching did the trick. An idea was forming. The Zantas were credited with having a very terrible secret society. All native secret societies, as he knew, are founded on religion.

That being so, M'gok, his friend and their Chief Priest, would be an important man in it, probably the leader, and Kado and the Sacred Pool would also come into the picture.

"Magnificent!" He almost danced as the idea came to him at last. Secret societies always get into trouble with the white Government sooner or later, sometimes because they aren't properly understood, often for some very good reason, as for instance when they stir up the tribe to attack another tribe or to offer human sacrifices. Now if he, Jerry, could get to know more about this secret society he might be able to keep old M'gok out of trouble.

And the way to learn more about the society lay through Kado. Kado! Gosh, what an idea!

Still thinking, Jerry turned and began to retrace his way, sighting a course of 90 degrees on his compass.

THE WINNING OF THE NAME

CHAPTER V

THE WINNING OF THE NAME

FOR the next fortnight Jerry was curiously employed. Every day he shot as much game as he could carry and took it to the Sacred Grove. With a long spiked stick he fed the sacred crocodile. Later, as he became accustomed to those tongueless, flashing jaws, he even fed the animal by hand. It was hard work, for he had to shoot the game at a distance so that no one's suspicions

would be aroused, and he had to go to the grove at noontime, the hottest hour of the day, for then all the men were in the fields working and none of the tribe could discover his secret.

Then he made several trips to the village and sought out the old Chief Priest. Each time that he sat and talked with him, Jerry made a point of discussing magic, particularly whiteman's magic, and particularly medicine. This was curious, for Jerry was not in the habit of bragging and, since he'd never been ill in his life, knew almost nothing about medicine.

To the Zantas, even to M'gok the Chief Priest, medicine meant magic. He agreed with Jerry that since the whiteman had so many marvels at his command, he could without doubt do much in the way of magic, even curative magic, which, as is well known, is even more difficult than harmful magic.

It was only when Jerry led the talk to the curing of animals—his horse or his dog perhaps —and then finally to curing of sick fish that the gnarled, enormous old man showed himself skeptical.

"Who," he asked with reason, "would want to

heal fish? Do not people want to kill them instead, so as to eat them?"

This was a difficult question to answer.

After a week Jerry stopped visiting the Chief Priest, but he still continued to take food to the crocodile. The way was easy to find since he always took his compass along, but he did begin to get bored with it after a while. Nothing seemed to come of it. And the double trek involved in shooting the game and carrying it into the grove, and then back again, seemed hardly worth while. He had about decided that he'd stop it . . . when M'gok sent for him.

The messenger refused to say what the Chief Priest wanted; perhaps he didn't know. Jerry decided that it must be something very secret, and pretty important, or there wouldn't be such a rush about it. He had grabbed his rifle and with Shol to heel hurried along after the man.

As they approached the village the boy tried not to run, for it seemed undignified, but coming hastily around the corner of a mud house he turned into the main street and almost stepped on his friend. M'gok sat, his legs stretched out, under the shade of a big mango tree.

Slowly, as befitted his years, the old man rose to greet the boy. Jerry had time enough to pull himself together and pretend to be no more than politely interested in what the priest had to say.

"Your father, the whiteman, what news of him?"

"Good news. I left him well. And what news of yourself and the Zanta tribe?"

The tall graybeard paused before replying. Then he answered, almost too hastily, "Well—well."

For a few seconds, which seemed far longer, the two—tall native priest and magician in the black leather loincloth and bushy top knot, and the short, wiry Anglo-Saxon boy—stood in the blaze of sunlight without speaking. The priest's messenger waited discreetly in the background, idly endeavoring to impale on his spearpoint a line of ants straggling across the path at his feet.

Then the priest waved away his messenger. Jerry tied up a shoe lace—not in the usual way, bending down to it, but in a fashion of his own, by standing on one foot, very straight, and lifting the other to his hand. Still they waited, each hoping somehow to guess what was in the other's mind.

"I sent for you for counsel." The old man's deep tones were uncertain, reflecting the uncer-

tainty of his mind. Jerry noted this as a good sign. "But something of this you have already heard, though I know not how."

"Nothing have I heard." The boy smiled inwardly. "Yet something do I know. For instance that, though the tribe is well and you are well, there is something that is not well with the tribe." Jerry had long ago mastered the tortuous ways of native speech as well as just its words.

"Can you, like the whitemen you speak of, cure sick animals, even fish?" The way the old priest said it, this did not sound like an idle question. Anxiety and even hope were in his voice.

"Some, perhaps. But first it is necessary to see both the animal and the sickness."

"Come then!" The old man turned and started straight away up the path through the village. As Jerry followed him the priest added, "And should you be able to make this cure, great will be the gratitude of all the Elders and the Zanta people!"

When they swung off into the secret path toward the Sacred Grove, the older one still leading, Jerry knew that his plot was ninety per-

cent sure. When they finally won through the aisled forest way and reached the pool, where the priest stopped and pointed with his staff to the crocodile lying asleep on the green bank, asleep and gorged with Jerry's hard-won meat, the boy would have put the chances at ninety-nine percent!

Twice the old man pointed. The second time he did so, Jerry remembered to look surprised at the sight of the wonderful beast, the secret of whose existence the Zantas kept so carefully. Then the priest spoke:

"Much you know, O son of the whiteman, but not this: that in this animal, neither fish nor yet truly beast, live the souls not only of all living Zantas, but of all those now dead."

Jerry looked impressed, and honestly so, too. For there was something very impressive in this fine old man.

"For a hundred years at least, fifty of which I know, we of the Zanta people have fed this crocodile. But for a fortnight now it has taken no food, even though we have pushed the meat into its jaws. Therefore we know that it is sick and that someone has stolen its soul." The old

man glared almost reproachfully at the beast that had so flouted his authority, and then turned to Jerry. "So now, if there is truth in your speech or power in the magic of the whiteman, put the soul back into our crocodile!"

As if to add his supplications to those of the priest, the crocodile slid his great twenty-foot length off the green bank, slowly. Once in the water and almost submerged, he turned and came up again, rising in the middle of the pool. Perhaps he recognized this white boy as the donor of luscious red haunches of game, which he had found so superior to the skinny chickens, still feathered, that the villagers sacrificed to him. With a sweep of his powerful tail he forged ripplingly back across the pool to the bank where Jerry stood.

"Ooogrh!" The Chief Priest's exclamation of awe showed that he accepted this as a good omen.

Jerry was thinking quickly. He didn't want actually to lie, but the trick could probably be turned without.

"O father of your religion," he said, "and guardian of the Zanta people—"

The old man turned hopefully as Jerry addressed him.

"If in truth the souls have gone out of him, then shall they be returned to him again. This I promise you. But on the third day from now, and not earlier." Jerry had fortunately remembered that crocodiles keep underwater larders in sloping holes in the bank. This one must first exhaust his store of food.

Then, when the old man would protest at the delay, Jerry asked: "The return of one soul to the body, is that easy? And *this* is a matter of thousands upon thousands of souls, if what you tell me is true."

That was easily understandable. The priest nodded agreement.

"And now let us go, for there is much before me."

Jerry was busy the next two days. He would have given a lot for a box of conjuring tricks such as he had once owned and worn out with much use. But he raked together a few things that might give a touch of mystery and magic to the simple task of feeding a hungry crocodile. And three days after the interview with the

Chief Priest he swung along the path of the Sacred Grove, carrying a satchel containing his bag of tricks.

The Elders awaited him, spread in a great crescent about the green rim of the pool. Some scowled as Jerry entered the ring, others suspended judgment upon him. Many showed their thoughts plainly in their black faces, and the boy decided against any preliminary patter before his medicine work. Also the *Sarakin Tsafi,* the Chief Priest, was giving him a better introduction than he could give himself. Quite convinced of the magic about to happen, the old man was convincing his audience.

"O Elders of the Zanta people," he chanted, standing straight and tall in the leafy green light beside the pool. "O brothers of the secret Society of the Moon, our souls and the souls of our ancestors have been sick within Kado, this crocodile."

There was a low grunt of assent from the assembly, and Jerry waited with interest.

"When Kado took no more food our souls became sick, and for day following day we neither went to our farms nor was singing or drumming

heard in the villages." Even the old man looked sick and despondent. The very real fear of the death of their souls hung over them. For the first time Jerry realized keenly the belief that all these natives had in the crocodile, and knew how serious was the work before him. He had started it as a jest, but it had grown out of all proportion to his plans.

The others were sitting or lying on the short grass, but the priest was standing, in order to give greater effect to his words. A priest is a trained speaker the world over.

"So." He stretched his black staff over the assembly. "So, without hope, I then called upon the son of the whiteman. He understands us, and will help us even as he has helped us in lesser ways before." For a time he stood there, arms outstretched, the green light that filtered through high branches glinting along the polished black of his great shoulder muscles, his old, lined face lit up by the earnestness of his appeal. The attention of even the most weary and ancient elder was now upon him.

"Contrary to all custom, I called upon him for help . . . upon him who is no Brother of the

Moon, and revealed to him the secret. As you know, the punishment for revealing this is death! I await now only to see the healing of Kado, the return of the souls of the Zantas. Then I shall be ready to die, either at your hands or—if you are unwilling—at my own."

Jerry felt chilled and sick. Well though he understood these people, he had never guessed what had been in his friend's mind. The jesting plan had been all along a tragedy! There was seemingly no chance to undo it now. Shakily he rose to his feet. He must play his own part in such a way as to bring conviction to the people before him, particularly to the mind of M'gok. For the priest, even if he died, must feel that he had given his life to save the tribe—he must have the consolation of complete success.

Drawing a deep breath to steady himself, Jerry made his first pronouncement.

"First, strength is needed!" he said, and produced from his haversack the beginning of magic. It seemed nothing more than a bottle and a glass. Unscrewing the stopper he held up the glass so that all might see, and poured out for himself a drink of bubbling soda-water.

"The water *boils!*" he cried.

A gasp came from all those near enough to see the bubbles. Then came a shout, almost a yell of terror, as Jerry drank off the apparently boiling liquid.

Giving time for the impression to gain full power, as the news was whispered along to the Elders too far off to see clearly, the boy poured out a second glass. This he handed to the Chief Priest. Cautiously the latter took it, found it not too hot to touch, sipped it, then drank it too.

Here was climax on climax! Eyes and mouths opened in consternation, and fingers nervously plucked at grass and clothing.

Putting his first props carefully back, Jerry next produced a small roll of black paper. It was the lining from a twelve-exposure film belonging to his father's camera. He showed them the small black thing lying in his palm—no deception!—then made a few passes over it in traditional conjurer style. Under his hand the little black roll lengthened—grew still longer—and longer, until, even to those seated near by, it looked like a solid, black staff such as they themselves carried and leaned upon. And finally, as

they watched, its end reached out just above the pool where the crocodile lay.

Then with a sleight of hand that did him credit, the boy slipped a treble charge of blue seidlitz powder into the end nearest him.

"Watch carefully the center of the pool while I call!"

Everybody's attention was now on the water. Swiftly Jerry put the tube to his mouth and blew the powder out over the water beneath, at the same time making the sound of a loud trumpet call. Then, as swiftly, he lowered the tube a little and slipped in a treble charge of the white seid-

"The water boils!"

A gasp came from all those near enough to see the bubbles.

litz powder, already mixed with ground red paint from the dried-up tubes in his old water-color box.

Then feigning anger, he cried, "This time let no man speak nor move while I set the horn to my lips!"

As he sounded the call for a second time he blew the mixture out over the water where the other had gone only a few seconds before. Now it was his turn to be anxious. He waited, holding his breath till the pulses began to pound in his head. Then suddenly a shout went up from the watching assembly. Men rose and pointed, cried to each other, and pulled at each other's robes to point again.

"Boiling blood upon the water! See—it boils—and it is the color of blood!"

Even Jerry had to admit to himself that it was impressive—the tumbling, bubbling red foam that spread slowly over the surface of the once still pool. Under cover of the general excitement he made the tube disappear again, then waved his hands to show that it was gone.

Then came the final wonder. Stirred by the bubbling—which must have been even more active below the surface—and roused by the shouts

of the men, the now hungry crocodile rose to investigate. A disturbance of any sort might well mean food. He came up swiftly and then, straight through the still reddened water, fearless of humans, he swam to where Jerry was standing. No one could have wished for greater magic, for stronger "medicine." To the onlookers Jerry had, through the exercise of miraculous powers, summoned the crocodile through the pool of mysterious bubbling blood.

The boy snapped his finger and hey . . . presto! A good-sized lump of meat materialized between his fingers. This he threw to the giant in the pool—who promptly gobbled it up and waited for more!

With a yell of delight the Elders pressed forward, crowding around Jerry, laughing their relief from strain. Kado had eaten again—he was cured! Their souls were safe once more in his keeping. Great was the Son of the Whiteman, marvelous his magic!

But Jerry scarcely heard them. He was watching his friend, the old priest. Try as he might, he could find no way out of the coming difficulty. For just as the people of Zanta believed

that the crocodile was now cured and ready for a hearty meal, so also they believed that the Chief Priest must now die for having betrayed their secret. It was the rule of the tribe, and their priest himself had said that it must be observed.

Sadly, and yet proudly, for he had done what he had set out to do, the old man looked out over the pool. At his signal, part of a goat was thrown to the sacred crocodile. Eagerly the knobbly old beast snapped at it and sank beneath the waters to devour his feast. A joyful shout rose from the Elders. Gently the old priest smiled, then made a sign for silence.

"Now do we know that the words of this son of the whiteman were true, and not mere idle boasting." He looked proudly at Jerry as he spoke. "All is well with the Keeper of Souls. The sun that goes down this night—" It gleamed slantingly through the long green aisles of the grove, penetrating here and there in a golden shaft of light where the trunks thinned— "will not rise again before another soul has gone to join our ancestors. It is well. The price is not too great."

Jerry had been thinking rapidly. He realized how unwise it would be—even if, indeed, it would be possible—to convince the Zanta people that the crocodile had never been ill, that he had tricked them all along. But there might be another way out of the difficulty.

"O people of the Zanta," he cried, "do not permit this deed. I am a whiteman and care nothing for the thousands of souls of people I have never known. But I will not be separated from the soul of my friend, the priest. Therefore . . ." He drew himself up with a grand gesture of power. "Therefore on the hour in which the soul of my friend leaves his body, I will take back all the souls which I have restored to your crocodile this day!"

Bravely he lied, for much was in the balance. He hoped they would not call his bluff.

Suddenly a knife twinkled past the boy and fell with a gentle splash far out in the water. A quick-thinking Elder had tried to stab Jerry and so prevent the execution of his threat.

The Chief Priest's eyes lighted fiercely with anger. His black staff fell with a crunch on hard

bone, and the Elder fell back nursing a broken wrist.

"Is it thus, fools, that you repay one who has saved your ancestors and even your thrice-worthless selves?"

M'gok's anger blazed out over the assembly, and those around him fell back in dismay. His fingers curled in wrath about his staff, and regretfully he relaxed them when none seemed willing to face him.

"O brother!" The old man turned to Jerry, his voice changing to sad pleading. "Do you not see that this thing *must* be? I do not care to die, but I do not fear it. Do not in your anger make my death a useless thing. There is no other trail. Had you been one of the Zanta tribe, you could have taken the Three Oaths and so become a Brother of the Moon. . . ."

"And then?" An idea had flashed through Jerry's mind.

"Ah, then your knowledge of our secret would be no sin." The old man's voice ceased. He looked at Jerry, and the boy, his mouth half opened to speak, looked back at him. The same thought had occurred to both, and like a flash

it spread round the assembly. There was a roar of voices.

"Let us accept him as a Brother of the Moon. Let the son of the whiteman take the Three Oaths!"

"Dad, excuse me for interrupting you, but—"

Mr. McLeod looked up from the pile of official papers before him on the desk. At the other end of the room Jerry was ostensibly doing his lessons. The boy seemed preoccupied this morning, his mind busy, probably, with some private interest. And indeed it was, for it was only the morning after he had been taken into the Society of the Moon, and he was still excited over the honor and the secret. His lessons, as a matter of fact, were all finished, and he was waiting for Mother to come and examine his work. Meanwhile he had idly picked up a magazine from the table and was looking through it.

"What I want to know," he went on, "is what 'anthropology' means. This magazine is called 'The British Review of Anthropology,' and there is something in it about Africa."

"Well," his father replied, "you are finding

out a good deal, yourself, aren't you, about the customs and traditions of the Zanta people? I've heard you comparing their ways with those of the other tribes of natives. What you have been learning is really anthropology—or perhaps ethnology. Anthropology is the study of Man—his tribal customs in different ages and in different parts of the world. That what you wanted? Though I should imagine that the articles in that magazine would be a bit stiff for you!"

"Not at all," the boy returned stoutly. "Here's one by some chap or other named Stuart on our own Zanta dialect, and I'm going to read it." And read it he did, while his father returned to his work.

Jerry's attention had been caught particularly by a statement in the article that seemed to him not quite right—or rather, it didn't go far enough. He could tell this chap a few things, even if he was only a boy. Well—why not? No use of saying anything to his father about it, but over there was his portable typewriter, and he supposed that if he wrote to this Stuart fellow in care of the magazine—there was a London address on the cover . . .

"THE MAN-EATING SOCIETY"

CHAPTER VI
"THE MAN-EATING SOCIETY"

SEVERAL weeks had passed since the exciting day when Jerry had been made a member of the Society of the Moon, and not the least interesting feature of his life during those weeks had been this new friendship with his "brothers." He had gone to most of their feasts and was taking part in the council of the Elders. This afternoon he was returning from one of the most im-

portant feasts, that of the Third Moon, and he felt a little uncomfortable at the prospect of the dinner that awaited him at home.

Dusk was falling, and he hastened his steps. The terrific heat of the day was dying with the sunset, and the scents of evening began to rise from tropical shrubs and tall brown grasses. Jerry took off his hat and slung it over his rifle, to let the cooling breeze blow through his hair. A long, discontented sigh expressed his feeling about the "company dinner" ahead of him.

His father's senior officer was coming from headquarters and bringing with him one Simpkins, who ran the next Division to this one. Jerry knew both men. Jamison was tall and thin, grizzled, worn, with a kindly twinkle in his gray eyes—eyes that missed nothing from a thumb bruised by a sling-shot to a frayed saddle-girth, but yet seemed always dreaming. The natives had a nickname for Jamison, as they had for nearly everybody. They called him Gizo—the Spider, the Cunning One—and liked him none the less for fearing him.

Jerry, too, had something of this feeling for Jamison, but when his thoughts turned to Simp-

kins he chuckled, recalling the man's native name, Chilakowa. For the chilakowa is the lesser hornbill, a mis-shapen bird that flies aimlessly from tree to tree in great haste, seeming always to reach the wrong tree, and always, with despairing, angry cries, swooping off to still another. And Simpkins was "Chilakowa"!

The coming of these two visitors from headquarters meant that tonight's dinner would be a formal, heavy meal with at least two extra courses. And Jerry had already dined too well. He knew that he must hurry, yet it was an effort to run, and it was only by dropping into a walk occasionally that he was able to get his wind back. Even the usual light supper would have been too much for him, and he feared that tonight he would either not be able to eat at all, or would fall asleep over his meal—and then his secret would have to come out!

But it was not to end so disastrously, after all, for his good friend Shol came to his rescue. The dog, crouched below Jerry at the table, gratefully took most of the food set before his master, and nobody seemed to notice the rather white-faced boy. He owed a lot to the fact, also, that

his elders were talking busily—grown people always seemed to have so much to say. Wouldn't they all have liked to be with him this afternoon? To sit with him at the secret feast of the Zanta people, the Feast of the Third Moon!

He recalled it the next morning as he sat studying. The sun was shining in long lines through the *zana* mat shutters, lighting up a line of black ants that trekked busily across the mud floor. Jerry wrenched his attention away from them, back to his usual morning hate, geometry. His perspiring hand stuck to the paper, and grasshoppers whirred and banged against the mats. In the garden outside he could hear the bleat of the old ram, the ram that followed the garden boy around like a kitten. It sounded like a forlorn call: "Maigona—Maigona! Whe-e-ere's Maigona?" There came a scent of wet earth from the newly watered flower-beds. The boy settled doggedly to his work again. If geometry were not finished by the time Mother came back to correct his papers, there would be no more shooting for two days—that was the penalty.

Jerry was not alone in the room. From the other end came the murmur of men's voices,

with now and then an angry snort from Simpkins. The two guests were talking "shop" with Mr. McLeod. They discussed crops and famines, inter-village raids, tribal wars of the past, recalling things that had happened before Jerry's time, before his father's time—even before the time when the Whiteman had come to West Africa. Marriage and burial customs, cattle-stealing, intrigues for chieftainship, religious ceremonies—all these came into their talk; and now and again the men quoted some bit of a native proverb.

Much of the discussion had to do with tribes and people whom Jerry knew. Simpkins seemed to spend a good deal of energy in calling, heatedly, for the punishment of this man and of that village, his beady eyes peering from behind his long aggressive nose. Even his appearance bore out his nickname, and Jerry thought that when he burst into one or another hot indictment, the resemblance to the lesser hornbill was unmistakable.

Jerry's father replied always in a low, quiet tone, so low that it did not always carry to the other end of the room; but the boy knew that he

was refuting the charges leveled against the villages beneath his rule. His people were not saints, of course, and the prison was kept fairly full of cheery, simple-minded folk who had done things that the whiteman's law said they mustn't do. But most of Simpkins's angry tales didn't ring true; though how, would have been difficult to explain to an outsider. You had to know the people.

Then they began to talk about Jerry's own particular friends, the Zantas, and it became harder and harder for him to keep from joining in. There was so much that even his father didn't know. He was always too busy for such casual wanderings as Jerry's, during which the boy had learned so much. Besides, his father was so important that people were rather afraid to chat freely with him, whereas Jerry. . . .

He was finding it impossible to keep his mind on the lesson in front of him. He leaned back in the canvas chair and wiped the perspiration from his face with a handkerchief already sopping. These days just before the rains were the hottest of the season. Then his mind wandered to yesterday's doings.

It had been the most interesting of all the feasts he had attended, this of the Third Moon after the harvest. By now all the corn had been gathered into the big grain-bins of mud, and most of it was threshed. The ceremony had none of the publicity of the harvest feast, or even of the sowing feast. At the latter the dancing went on far into the night, and men, women, boys and even girls attended it. At yesterday's rites, on the other hand, only the heads of families, the priests of the tribal cults, and the chiefs themselves had been present.

Jerry had read nearly everything that was typed or printed or written about West Africa, but he had never seen any description of this sort of ceremony. Even his father seemed to know nothing about it. And Jerry was bound, by solemn oath taken on the three souls of his grandfather, not to reveal what it was like.

With his rifle, as much a part of him as his right hand, Jerry had stopped on the rising ground just in front of the Sacred Grove. The bush was thick here, for it was swampy all about even in the dry season, and the tall trees had never been burned to make room for farms, as

had the trees in the rest of the Zanta country. They loomed dark and mysterious, beckoning him towards the thicker woods that lay behind. The boy placed his rifle on the ground—for you must not touch iron when taking the oath—then stretched his arms to each side.

"On the soul of my grandfather, which is in my father and in me, I bring peace!"

As he spoke the appointed words, the deep, throbbing note of a bull-roarer answered from the blackness of the trees. The natives in their black leather loincloths, who had waited, listening, at the edge of the grove, melted away and Jerry was left to follow. He picked up his rifle. Through the trees a narrow path covered with short grass led twistingly inwards. All was cool here, and though it was early afternoon none of the glare outside penetrated. It was like entering a cool and shadowy cathedral.

The path ran along for a few hundred yards through the trees. This had always seemed to Jerry an impressive entrance, doubly impressive because of its peace and silence.

Either all the birds had flown away, or none

lived here, no crickets chirped, and no footfall sounded through the long aisles.

Then he stopped. Before him stretched the small, circular pool of black water, by now so familiar to him. Round about it, some ten or twelve feet back from its swampy green margin and close to the trees that rimmed it, crouched the silent Elders. Jerry felt a little thrill of pride that they were waiting for him. This was indeed far from geometry and bed at nine o'clock. He was one of these people.

Again he put down his rifle. Then he raised his arms and intoned the second oath.

"On the soul of my grandfather that is in his grave, I am of your brotherhood."

An old man, his friend M'gok the Chief Priest, motioned him to proceed with the third and last oath.

Slowly, with solemn step, he made his way to a place on the rim of the pool, stepping cautiously lest he slip from solid ground. For the last time he put down his rifle, behind him this time so that it would be safe.

He leaned over and dipped one finger into the pool. The sacred crocodile swam towards

him with scarcely a ripple of its long, strong tail. It paused a moment, hardly showing above the dark water save as a lighter streak across the black; then, instead of snapping, it nosed the boy's finger gently and waited like a floating log, eyes and nostrils only showing.

"On the soul of my grandfather, which is everywhere, even within this pool . . ." Jerry closed his eyes and a ripple of mirth shook him inwardly as he thought of the funny, solid little pink-faced grandfather who used to give him lollipops being blood brother and kin to a crocodile . . . but he recovered himself and went on—"even within this pool," he chanted in the Zanta speech, "I bring true counsel."

The thing like a floating log turned slowly with a lazy swish of its great tail and was silently and instantly out of sight again. It is doubtful whether it could have eaten so much as Jerry's littlest finger, since only that morning he had taken the precaution of filling the old green beast full to the brim with a couple of freshly killed antelope. Jerry was nothing if not thorough, and it was not only on ceremonial days that he did this. In fact, no one else fed

the sacred crocodile so often or so regularly as he, and he was repaid for his trouble in many ways.

"Son of the Whiteman!" The Chief Priest, standing tall and black, his long spear in his hands, voiced the feeling of the assembly. "Friend of Kado, wherein live the souls of our ancestors, lend us thy counsel. Just as the souls of our forefathers swim towards you and greet you in Kado, so also do we greet your counsel. For we know that our ancestors approve and that your counsel is good, wise."

There was a deep murmur of assent from the Elders ranged about the pool, and Jerry blushed, trying not to wriggle in embarrassment. He wished they weren't so kind and simple, these black farmer-folk. But there was truth in the praise. For ever since he had been elected to the Moon Society of the Zanta people he had advised them with a wisdom which would have surprised his father and the grown-ups. As Jerry saw it, if you were largely responsible for the plans of the hidden rulers of several thousand men, women and children, you had to do just the best you could.

"How did the last plan go?" asked Jerry, sinking down on the turf beside the Elders. He wanted to know, but he also wanted to put an end to this praise. "Those strangers who came trading and drew your young men to distant cities by a show of wealth, do they come as before in thousands, like locusts?" he asked.

"No," an old graybeard answered, and chuckled as he spoke. "Where before they came in hundreds, pouring off the main highway, now they come only in twos and threes and warily, fearing death." He grinned toothlessly. "Those that came from the south, from the great river, we met, and asked them for goods that they could buy only from the north, from the distant railway. Thus, many did not return whence they came. And those traders arriving from the north found that what we most desired was cloth, which they could buy most cheaply from the south on the great river. So they went hastily to the south to buy, that they might return and sell to us at great profit. But many have not yet returned to their homes in the north for the journey is far." The speaker paused again to savor his story.

"This was the plan you suggested. Also we did as you ordered us and sent cunning people to the north, to the railway, who mingled with the market traders and asked warily, 'Where are so and so, and so and so, who once went trading in the Zanta country?' Then, when none could answer them, since the men had been persuaded to go south to the river, these cunning ones we sent exclaimed, 'Alas, it is true then, that the Society of the Moon have killed them and eaten them?'

"And to the markets on the big river, also, we sent men asking for those whom we had sent to buy in the north. And they, too, finding no trace of the departed ones, exclaimed sadly, 'Alas, the Society of the Moon, those men of the Zantas, have killed them and eaten them!' "

Grins both toothed and toothless passed around the assembly. It had proved the greatest jest in years, this bluffing of the cunning strangers who would have come in to trade and to despise and exploit the Zanta tribe.

In the old days the stranger tribes would never have dared to treat the Zanta people in this way, but relying upon the Whiteman's peace, they

had become more and more of a nuisance, crowding into the best places in the markets, even trying to settle on Zanta land and overcharging for all they wished to sell to the villagers. Some of the younger men had wanted to drive them off with force of arms, if necessary killing a number, that they might learn a costly lesson. But Jerry's plan had proved far more effective. Brave old fighters and farmers, these Zanta Elders—Jerry was proud of their approval of his plan and their appreciation of its success.

As if to join in the joke the ancient crocodile rose slowly to the surface of the pool and lay motionless, watching with bright, unblinking eyes.

"See!" cried the old man, pointing with a lean and gnarled finger. "Kado himself rises to taste of the jest! And indeed it has been good. Even when men whom they think to be dead return home, there will always be others of whom they do not hear, and of whom they will say, 'These, at least, the Zanta people have eaten!' "

So they passed on to other matters. There was, for instance, a complaint of witchcraft, a serious matter which, in the days before the whiteman

came, would have gone disastrously. Here Jerry took a leaf out of his father's book, for he believed that, if there was full proof of witchcraft, then it ought to be punished. It was no good to tell these people that there was no such crime. So when the accused was brought before the council Jerry suggested that they examine the evidence.

Long and tiresome was the wrangle that followed. The boy took no part in this. He simply asked now and then: "Who told you this?" And always it turned out that the witness had not, himself, seen what he so graphically related, but had heard it from someone else, or even at third hand.

Wearily, much in his father's manner after a long day of complicated court cases, Jerry turned to the Chief Priest.

"Ten men have spoken saying that the man is guilty, but none can say, 'I *know,* my eyes having seen.' The evidence would not be enough to convict a man of stealing a broken potsherd, much less of stealing a soul and eating it."

A gleam of appreciation showed in the old man's eyes. The summary hit off his own feeling.

"It is the talk of fools," M'gok told the assembly in even tones that held more than a hint of menace. "It is time the tribe brought before us matters of which they know, not tales such as old women tell their grandchildren at twilight to frighten them."

This was the idea that Jerry wanted to foster. He felt it wise to leave them with it, rather than let them work it off in talk. He could not tell the direction of the sun in this thick glade, but suspected that the afternoon was nearly gone. Mother never scolded when he was late for tea, or even if he missed it now and then, but he wished he knew the time. His watch was being repaired, so he could only guess. Had Shol been here he would have suggested, with pointing ears and pleading eyes, that a meal-time was going by; but Jerry had always been afraid to bring him to the crocodile pool, lest the sacred beast and his dog should not agree on all matters.

As he looked anxiously about, he saw, standing at the entrance to the grove, a young boy, who advanced and stooped to give a message to

one of the Elders on the edge of the circle. Jerry saw the rest rise, and he began to hope that he might soon slip away. So he got up, saying:

"On the soul of my grandfather which is everywhere, even within the pool, I have brought my counsel."

Then he picked up his rifle and started to make his way through the tree boughs which arched above the path. Carefully, so as not to touch the sights, he placed the rifle upon the ground. "On the soul of my grandfather which is within his grave, I remain of your brotherhood."

The narrow track through the woods was like a black tunnel. None of the light from the low sun seemed to penetrate here. With the gravity of his responsibilities to the tribe still upon him, Jerry made his way along it, noticing ahead of him others who had gone before, their bodies gleaming dimly in the leafy light. As he once more struck the open field that edged the grove, the boy drew a full breath. It was beautifully cool now, and good, too, to be responsible for himself alone. His worries seemed to fall from him.

"On the soul of my grandfather which is in my father and in me,"—Jerry stretched his arms in the last oath—"I leave you in peace!"

He turned down the path toward home, but already many of the tribe were before him, gathered in an eager group to stop him, and Jerry found with something of dismay that he could not yet get away. The lad who had come into the grove had brought word that the feast the women had prepared was ready to be eaten. And unless he ate—something, at least—he would offend the tribe unforgivably. Oh, well—he could probably break away early. No one would insist that he stay the feast out, for it would last late into the night, and the white people's customs were not like those of the Zantas.

That feast!—Jerry preferred to close his eyes and forget it. Why, even this morning, hours after it was over, he had not been able to manage a really hearty breakfast . . . At his desk in the schoolroom he shuddered at the memory of the feast. There had been roast goat, he recalled, and monkey meat, which he had preferred not to touch, and python, which was reputed to be ex-

cellent. Then yams, and yams, and more yams, and various sorts of porridge-like, highly flavored stews, and bananas, and sweetmeats made from sugarcane and from wild honey, with much palm-oil wine and native beer to wash it down. Jerry had tasted as little as he could, but again and again when he had tried to get away with politeness and tact, it had been impossible to escape.

As Jerry's mind had been wandering back to the meeting of the Zanta Society of the Moon, the argument at the farther end of the room had been increasing in heat. Jamison, a cigarette in his fingers, leaned back at his ease, gazing vaguely into space. Simpkins, red of face, his voice pitched high with excitement, leaned forward, gripping the seat of his chair and urging his points first on one, then on the other, of his audience.

"So here are the people of my Division, peaceful traders, being slaughtered at the rate of about ten a month by the Zantas! And when I come here and tell Mr. McLeod, instead of being thanked, I am practically told to mind my own business!"

"Not at all," Jerry's father returned pacifically. "I am merely suggesting, Simpkins, that when you bring in such wholesale accusations you ought to support them by some evidence—real evidence, even if only a little. So far—" and he broke off his sentence with a slight shrug.

Jamison allowed himself to smile—just the faint flicker of a smile it was, but enough to drive Simpkins into still greater fury as he caught sight of it. He began again to protest, looking, Jerry decided, more than ever like the futile hornbill.

"Since the murders happened in your Division and not mine," he retorted hotly, "naturally I cannot collect any 'real evidence,' as you call it. But I can tell you of one thing that I suspect you don't know about. You have probably never even heard of the man-eating Society of the Moon, have you? But it is a real society, and it exists in your Division—and it is members of this infernal society that are responsible for all the killings!"

For a moment there was silence. Jerry, over at

his desk, sat in astonished horror, astonishment and resentment strangely mixed with an intense desire to laugh. His friends man-eaters! All his self-control was needed, in this moment of silence, to prevent him from bursting in with indignant denials. *He* knew—none better—how false the accusation was. But dared he contradict Simpkins? No, decidedly no. If he were to blurt out the truth, the beans *would* be spilled, with a vengeance! Not even his father, yet, must learn of his intimate acquaintance with the Society of the Moon. Better let Dad handle the situation. It wasn't the first time he had met a Simpkins!

That angry little man was meanwhile glaring at his host. Mr. McLeod sat looking at him steadily, watching the perspiration fall, drop by drop, from the Simpkins chin. Presently he spoke, slowly and very calmly.

"No," he answered. "I can't say that I have ever heard of such a man-eating society in my Division. But for that allegation, too, I must ask you for proof. It's interesting—if true. I don't think we have to settle the matter today,

and besides, it is hardly my job to make the first move—it's yours." His stern seriousness was interrupted here by a slow smile. "I suggest that you produce, as early as possible, a corpse or two, or—failing that—perhaps the menu card of one of these man-eating feasts!"

Certainly Dad's undisturbed manner was bringing this difficult episode to a peaceful close. Jerry was glad that he hadn't interfered. The Simpkins man kept opening and closing his mouth as though he wanted to say something, but couldn't think of just the right thing to say. Anyhow, Jamison rose from his chair, at a sidelong gesture from Mr. McLeod, and murmured something about "better be going along." His host promptly extended his hand in a goodbye to his visitors, and with the utmost courtesy edged the futile Simpkins toward the door. Jamison went out last, and Jerry caught the significant and sympathetic twinkle with which he took his leave of Mr. McLeod.

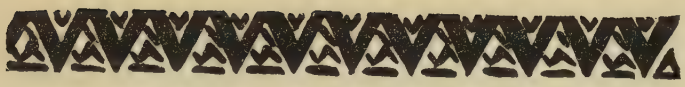
Dad himself stayed only long enough to throw Jerry a skeptical question, which, the boy reflected as he returned to his geometry, really

meant a lot that his father hadn't intended it to!

"Man-eating society my hat! What do you know about that, Jerry?"

"Gummy green Eliza!" murmured the boy as he fell to on his neglected problems.

THE GHOST HYENAS



CHAPTER VII

THE GHOST HYENAS

SIMPKINS had bellowed for his car, clambered angrily into the seat beside the native driver, and disappeared creaking and rattling in a cloud of dust. Dad and Jamison had ridden off towards Langai. Dad might stay at Langai, or he might go on southwards after spending the night there. Mother had gone to stay with some friends near the Coast. So Jerry kept house, ordering his own

meals, seeing that the horses were exercised, and generally supervising the garden and the work of the ten native servants, grooms and their wives and families.

He had been having a wonderful time. Since getting up early this morning—and it was still not quite nine o'clock—he had settled a dispute between the garden boy and his wife, laid a floor with a new compound of his own invention, and been down the well to see if it needed deepening. With his back braced against one side of the well, his feet in the holes on the other side, he had worked his way to the bottom, scorning any aid from the fragile native ropes. The well did need deepening; also, it had in it the remains of two broken leather well buckets, a score or so of frogs, a salmon tin, two lost garden rakes, and the broken end of a drum. Now, as Jerry sat in the shade of the veranda, he could see a cheery mob of garden boys busily at work cleaning out the débris.

Bathed now and in fresh clothes, Jerry was having his breakfast in the deep coolness of the veranda. He stirred his second cup of cocoa—which he had perhaps sweetened unduly, but

then he felt he had earned it—and looked with pride at the section of the veranda floor lying black and shiny in front of him. It was made of packed earth like the rest of the flooring, but over this now lay a new mixture of the sap of a kind of rubber tree. It ought to prove ant-proof, water-proof and almost wear-proof. It would be a grand surprise to his parents if it dried hard and proved to be all the things Jerry hoped it was. If it didn't dry . . . well, Dad wouldn't say anything.

Jerry thoroughly enjoyed this domestic peace. He had had enough adventure recently to last him a long time, years and years perhaps. What he wanted now was just this—peace and comfort and plenty of sugar in his cocoa. He poured a third cup, stretched luxuriously, slapped a fly on his knee and helped himself to more of the sliced mangoes the house boy offered him.

Shol, rather neglected in this peace-and-comfort fit of Jerry's, was busy gnawing a bone which one huge forepaw clamped to the ground. He chewed it idly, for pastime, not with the pulverizing crunches he used for serious eating. Presently he rose and stretched hind legs up,

chest to the ground, then yawned cavernously and stalked to the door. After a couple of bored sniffs of the fresh cool air, he returned to Jerry's side to fix his master with a steady, unwinking stare.

"Oh, gosh!" protested Jerry disgustedly, "have we *got* to go out shooting?"

Shol's stare was reproachful. Of course one had to shoot, just as one had to eat or sleep. Those three things made up life, and the more you got of all of them the better.

Jerry wriggled one bare foot clear of its sandal and dug Shol in his chest with a big toe. The dog relaxed with a grin—at least, it would have been a grin if it had been just half as big.

"Oh, all right then, all right!" and as the house boy brought his shoes, Jerry slipped his feet into them, slid some twine and a handful of ammunition into his pocket and looked again at the brindled dog. Shol was doing an elephantine sort of dance between him and the door. The boy picked up his rifle and sun-helmet and went out. The dog shot down the path, nose to ground, in search of news of game.

They had gone a matter of two miles or so

from the house and Jerry was bending down to examine some tracks—hyena tracks undoubtedly, for what dog (except Shol perhaps) had such huge pads? Besides, no dog's nail marks went so deep into the red earth.

"O thou!" A thin, piping voice behind him made him jump. He turned to examine the speaker.

It was a dusty little figure, a boy of Jerry's adopted tribe, the Zantas, short and thin with only a scrap of leather loincloth about his middle. He looked like any of the group of dingy little boys that overran the native village, and in any case Jerry never paid much attention to small boys, feeling slightly superior to their games and hunting.

But the piping voice continued. "If you hunt this hyena it will be in vain." The boy scratched his leg with a big toe of the other foot. "It is a were-hyena of the Wilderim village. My father says so. He is a hunter, and so am I."

Proudly the grubby urchin displayed the arrows of his calling, as well as a quite serviceable little bow.

Jerry was interested. He had thought that the

huge tracks might be those of the dangerous brute that had killed the Zanta goats and dogs last year, and had even invaded the cactus stockade and torn the leg of an old woman. What did this small hunter know about the hyena?

"O Son of the Crocodile!" The boy gave Jerry his native name. "These Wilderim people have again set forth, killing and stealing. They turn themselves to hyenas that they may not be caught and punished. But we find their tracks, many of them, about the village at dawn, and our goats become fewer with each day."

"Well, if they turn themselves into hyenas, why not kill them as hyenas?" Jerry's practical mind suggested.

"Because then they have the brains of a man,

but the powers of a hyena to see and to run and even to fight," the boy explained. "My father, who has much knowledge, would have our tribe fall upon the Wilderim people and kill them while they are in human form, for then it will be much easier."

Jerry opened his mouth to reply, then shut it again and thought rapidly. He remembered the Wilderim people. He had once visited their village with his father. They were the small remnant of a once mighty tribe, a tribe that had hunted these parts before even the coming of the Zantas, heaven knew how many years ago. Now they were a small island in a sea of Zantas, still keeping up their nocturnal hunting habits, farming scarcely at all, and misunderstood and suspected by their powerful neighbors.

Shol sat down, scratched, looked around in a bored fashion and scratched again. But Jerry took no notice of him. He was thinking fast, though to all appearances idly cleaning a speck of dust from his spotless rifle.

Even just before the coming of the Whiteman there had been at least three villages of the Wilderim people. But one night, according to

the story, the Zantas, annoyed by their mischievous magic, had surrounded them and all but annihilated them. Some few had escaped, fleeing for refuge to the subterranean holes that abounded in their broken rocky country. It had taken nearly a generation under the Whiteman's peaceful rule for them to straggle back, like scared and wounded animals, and to found a fresh village.

Jerry thought rapidly. If the Zantas were to attack them now, all this would be wiped out. The Wilderim people, who were in his father's district, might be completely dispersed before his father could come to the rescue. Moreover, the Zantas would suffer punishment, severe and swift, if they did this thing; and the Zantas of the Crocodile Totem were as Jerry's own brothers now. Any number of men—powerful, wise and foolish men—would die because no one had convinced them that this marauding hyena was a mere animal, not a ghost hyena with a Wilderim brain and soul in it. In loyalty to his own Zanta brothers Jerry could not let them proceed with this folly.

The small boy had more to say. "And so, my

father says, let us kill them all and live in peace ever after, with no one stealing our goats or killing our children. Only, the Chief Priest will not allow this to be done."

That all this was important, Jerry was convinced. Shol's boredom didn't matter now, nor the heat, nor the ruined hunt, if only he could extract the further information he needed. He tried guile.

"But of course, little one," he said, putting into his words as much of bored superiority as he could—almost of sneering; "of course your father has no power in the tribe. If the Chief Priest says that this killing may not be, of what use is your father's idle chatter?"

"O fool of a white boy!" The "little one" stamped with rage. "Little do you know. Within this week my father and his many friends will go by night and watch the caves of the Wilderim people. They will kill the Wilderims, every one, as they return to their caves and change back to human form."

The little one made a face at Jerry and slipped away into the bush, disappearing as silently as a small animal. Jerry took up the trail again

with a broad grin on his face. It had been too easy! Then swiftly the grin subsided and he whistled his dismay. Something would have to be done to prevent this massacre. But *what?* Oh, gosh, if only his father were here!

Jerry could act rapidly when he needed to, but he saw his cherished dream of peace and quiet vanishing into thin air. Within half an hour of his return home—and he hurried back in spite of Shol's puzzled protests—he had sent off an urgent message to his father. The District Officer might be a day or a week distant. Meanwhile Jerry, on questioning the servants, discovered a soiled and ragged cook's mate who was a Wilderim boy but who spoke enough of the Zanta tongue to be useful. Jerry, of course, knew the Zanta speech as he did his own.

The boy was then and there ordered to drop the cleaning of pots and pans, led into the seclusion of the schoolroom, settled comfortably on the floor and Jerry got down to it. Hour after hour Jerry paced the floor hurling questions at the astonished but interested Wilderim boy.

How did he say, for instance, in the Wilderim speech, "Health, greetings to you!"?

The boy told him the words, and Jerry, with little success at first, attempted to reproduce the strange, discordant sounds.

"What is the word for hyena?"

The cook's mate grunted it, and added a jangle of other noises which were evidently a voluntary contribution of his own. Jerry tactfully got him to translate it into Zanta, and then went over and over the other sounds he had made.

Shol followed patiently for a time, as his master paced the length of the room and back, then disgustedly went out to flop down with a grunt on the outer veranda. Jerry continued, painfully at first, then with more and more ease, getting bits of sentences, facts he thought he should know, and with them tiny scraps of Wilderim customs, information on the status of this man and that in the village; and all the time he artfully slipped in questions about the hyenas.

Dusk fell and with it came coolness. Jerry had stopped to drink his tea and to send the Wilderim boy for his own food; then they were back at it again. The native boy was growing weary and bored. A house boy came with a lamp

but Jerry waved it away. There was an early moon and the room was sufficiently light. He could concentrate better without the lamp. The Wilderim boy grew more and more tired. Between questions Jerry murmured over and over again words of the Wilderim speech as he caught them, straining ear to catch and throat to reproduce those bewildering singsong vowels and contorted consonants.

But at last the native boy, too weary to speak, became completely useless. Jerry, who knew how precious time was if his plan were to succeed, could have shed tears of rage. Fortunately the boy knew a fellow countryman in a nearby village, and he was sent on the run to fetch him. Jerry ate some supper, reflecting that what had at first seemed bad luck—the collapse of the cook's mate—might prove to be good luck, since on the person of a second Wilderim boy he could test out his newly learned speech.

After the meal Jerry gave his rifle its evening clean, then bathed and got into pajamas and mosquito boots and a thin silk dressing gown. By this time the second boy had arrived from the village, breathless with haste, mouth and

eyes open with surprise. He was surprised still more to be greeted in his own tongue, and Jerry could have danced with glee when he found that he had made himself perfectly understood —that he had forgotten no single intonation of the difficult sounds.

For another two hours they kept up the word drill. Then it was Jerry who began to weary. He was still young himself and had not a man's strength. Also he was accustomed to early bedtime, and though he paced the schoolroom floor, trying to make the physical activity keep him awake, he found himself stumbling with fatigue and sleepiness. Finally he gave it up and went off to bed; but he turned and tossed under the hot mosquito net, his mind too tired and keyed up for proper rest, as he muttered, in his sleep, the new words and phrases.

At dawn the house boy woke him, and Jerry, somewhat pale and worn, ate and drank, got into his bush shirt and shorts, picked up his rifle and went out, Shol following at his heels.

No trace of the Wilderim village could be seen from the foothills. Jerry tilted back his sun-

helmet and looked upwards, but there were only huge, piled boulders, and here and there a green tuft among the gray rocks, where some tree had taken root and made the fissure wider. But the boy had been to the top before and knew that up there somewhere were the little cups of earth in which the Wilderim folk planted their glass-like *atcha* or hill corn, each cup carefully fenced round against damage by rock rabbits. Somewhere up there too, though he had never seen them, were the scattered little clumps of mud huts, grass-thatched, that made up the village.

At first the path upwards could be traced across the gray rock by the red stain of earth carried by bare feet from the foothills below. Then even this track grew fainter and ceased. All that was left to guide one was the polished line on the hard rock worn smooth by countless generations of climbing feet.

Jerry leaped from rock to rock, thankful for his crêpe-rubber soles, which were almost as good as bare feet here. He was amused to see how his steps fell, automatically, into just the

marks where steps had gone before. Shol was having a wonderful time. He even forgot his dignity so far as to chase an insignificant green-headed lizard, and as it slid safely over the edge of a rock, only a swift application of the dog's four-wheel brakes, applied with frantic scrabbling of claws, saved him from crashing down to almost certain death. That sobered him for a while.

It was very hot here. The stone poured back scorching sun into Jerry's face. He looked for a bit of shadow, difficult to find since they had been approaching on the eastward slope, but at last he found a place he thought would do for this first act of his plan. Sitting down cross-legged he waited a bit. A rock rabbit peered out from the crevices above and then came forth to sun himself. Jerry took careful aim.

As the report of the rifle re-echoed to the foothills and back, the animal spun high in the air and fell lifeless to the rocks below. Shol was on to the rat-like animal in a flash. He gave it one nip to make certain it was dead, then brought it and laid it at his master's feet.

But Jerry sat still and waited; not a long wait. Cautiously a head, a man's head apparently, was thrust up over a rock on the path ahead. Jerry shouted a greeting in what was a very good reproduction of the Wilderim tongue, then stood up and waved the animal he had shot.

Almost to Jerry's surprise it worked. He had planned it, of course, but still it was astonishing. Shoulders and the rest of the body followed the head. The man appeared on the rock and came leaping down. When he was close he sank on one hand in the Zanta fashion and gave what was intended to be the Zanta words of greeting. Jerry answered in the Wilderim speech.

A look of puzzled surprise twisted the black features. Jerry repeated the words, taking great pains with the intonation. The slim, almost feminine-looking man grinned broadly with quick pleasure and burst into what seemed like a song.

Jerry shook his head, held up the rock rabbit and said its name twice in his newly found speech.

The man nodded emphatically. Then quickly he pointed to something over Jerry's shoulder.

Another animal. This one had probably bolted at the report of the rifle and come out again to explore. Only his head showed above the rock, a little speck almost two hundred yards away. The new friend wanted to lead Jerry towards it. Jerry shook his head, spit on his hands for luck, and sat down to cuddle the rifle to his shoulder. A careful estimate gave him the range as two-thirty yards: difficult, but not so difficult as it looked. For a couple of feet below the rabbit's head the rock sloped smoothly up. A bullet hitting it would slide upwards and be as effective as a direct hit on the animal.

Smoothly he pressed the trigger. A crashing report, and another rock rabbit leaped spasmodically into the air and fell dead.

"Another redskin bit the dust!" murmured Jerry to himself with a satisfied grin as he watched the race between Shol and the hillman. The slenderly built Wilderim man was incredibly fast over the difficult course, but with a bluff of bared teeth Shol secured the game which he had not won by speed. Panting, the two returned to Jerry.

Three more rock rabbits fell to his rifle in

three more successive shots. The game was now more than his new friend could carry.

Jerry meanwhile racked his brain for one of the names he had learned last night, the name of the Chief Elder of the people. They had no real ruler.

"Gik!" he said at last and pointed to the game. Then he made signs of carrying it to the village.

The Wilderim man looked puzzled.

Jerry tried again. He must get the old man's name. This time he put more force into the consonants.

"Ngyikh!" he spluttered.

This time it worked. The man produced a sound that was a cross between a song and a fizz, and made signs that indicated that the owner of the name had a beard and no teeth.

"Yes," Jerry nodded, then summoning up all he could of the Wilderim speech he gurgled. "Give . . . rock rabbit . . . *Nnnggyikkh!*"

It was a noble effort and left Jerry coughing. But the man sprang up the path with the game, as was intended. So Jerry sat down again on the hot rock and thought out his position while he waited.

He had learned a bit of the language, and he grunted in disgust as he recalled how difficult it had been. He had introduced himself by killing some of the pests which destroyed the village crops but which were too wary to come within range of the native arrows. He felt certain that these things had given him the desired introduction; at least, he had made friends with one of the men. More might follow. At any rate almost any other line of approach would have failed. They would have been "not at home" to an unwelcome caller, or they would have driven him off with stones or dogs, or even arrows.

The morning breeze was getting up and he raised his hat a bit to let the cool air ruffle through his hair. Shol sat and sniffed the scents about him or made pretence of seeing rock rabbit everywhere in the hope of getting his master to move.

The next step, Jerry felt, would be to get the people to recognize the danger that threatened them. If he could persuade them to move away into hiding until his father returned, then the Zanta ringleaders could be arrested. But his

father might not be back for a month—or he might arrive tomorrow.

The boy stood up to start towards the village. As he did so one black shape, then another, then scores and still more came pouring over the rocks, like driver ants, towards him. It was the Wilderim people. They were full of curiosity to see this strange white boy who spoke their tongue and killed the hated rock rabbit with such ease and at such long range.

Jerry looked anxiously along the line as they poured down the rock path. His present must have done the trick, for well in front of the swarming crowd, toothless and wrinkled of skin but still leaping from rock to rock like a mountain goat, came Ngyikh himself.

An hour later and after much gesturing and many tongue-slitting sounds as evolved by Jerry, and supposed to represent the Wilderim speech, the boy had satisfied himself that the villagers were entirely innocent of any midnight goat-stealing from the Zanta people, whether in their supposed disguise as hyenas, or in their own black persons. He also had been assured that nothing on earth would make them leave their

homes and that if attacked they would fight it out to the last man, Zanta or Wilderim.

But—and it was a most important "but" to Jerry—they would willingly help him shoot as many hyenas as he liked; particularly if he gave them the skins and the meat.

His first plan had been completely spoiled by the villagers' definite refusal to leave home and hide for a while. He could not now count on his father's return and aid, and none knew when the Zantas might strike. He must build a new plan, one in which he alone figured, without help from his father. For if the Zanta people struck, then every last Wilderim man would be massacred, and his own people, his own Totem brothers, would be punished. Only on the villagers' willingness to help him kill hyenas could Jerry build a further plan.

If enough hyenas could be killed to prove to the Zanta people that the Wilderim people neither turned themselves into hyenas nor protected them, all might be well. But was there time? None knew when the Zantas might strike.

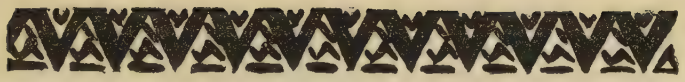
Jerry fired a last shot from his rifle, a spectacular shot as usual. Then he turned to Ngyikh.

His whole body ached for rest, but there was no alternative.

"Tonight we shoot hyena?"

And the old man, having been witness to the neat and miraculous killing of the last rock rabbit, assented with more than willingness.

JERRY ADOPTS A NEW TRIBE



CHAPTER VIII

JERRY ADOPTS A NEW TRIBE

It was evening when Jerry started back again on the weary trail to the village in the rocks. He had gone home for food and rest, but without waiting to eat had collapsed into log-like sleep with his rifle beside him, and Shol asleep on the floor. Now he had bathed and eaten and the sun was already setting. The redness in the sky warned him that he must hurry if he would

be in time, for soon the hyenas would leave their holes and scatter over the countryside to their night's hunting and scavenging.

But *gosh,* he was tired! He would have given anything to meet Dad on the road and have him take charge of the entire affair.

Shol pointed at something, and Jerry's rifle automatically and through long practice came up to his shoulder. Then he remembered, lowered his gun, and walked on. If he shot now he might alarm the hyena, for he was getting close to the holes where they lived. Somehow, at whatever cost, he must bag two of them. And somehow . . . heaven knew how . . . he must persuade the Wilderim to carry them to the Zantas. That would stave off the trouble for a few days, perhaps. And by then . . .

Ngyikh stepped out of the bush at the side of the track and Jerry almost jumped from the path in surprise. This was better than he had hoped.

Jerry would have made salutations, but the old man signed to him in the dim light to be silent; then motioned him to follow. Puzzled, since they had not yet reached the place where

the hyena lairs were, Jerry fell in behind the old man, signing to Shol to keep to heel. They had not gone a hundred yards before he understood. The bush opened out into a natural clearing, and leading into it were well-worn game trails, each of which, as he bent down in the dusk and peered closely, plainly showed recent hyena tracks.

Hyenas, of course, follow paths or even much-traveled roads in preference to thick bush. Perhaps it was some such desire for a well-beaten path that had made them converge from their separate lairs into this clearing and then follow one clear track down to the plains.

But Jerry had no time for closer examination. Abruptly his guide sank down behind some long grass that gave him cover. Jerry and Shol flopped too.

The last light had gradually faded, and the color went out of the sky. Jerry crouched unmoving, listening, listening. Cautiously he stretched one cramped leg, hoping the hyena would not come till the moon was fully up. An owl swooped silently and seemed to catch something in the clearing. As objects were slowly blotted out from the boy's eyes by the gathering darkness his attention concentrated on smells and sounds, particularly smells. In the full heat of the day, one's nose is too dry to scent much detail, but as the air cools, moistened smells begin to increase in number. The dead, oven odor of baked earth vanished, and Jerry could distinguish two kinds of flowering shrub. To

pass the slow time he amused himself by trying to switch from nose to ears and back again.

First there was the sound of Shol still panting slightly from the heat, and the crackling and buzzing and whirring of tiniest insects close to his head in the tall grass. There was a ringing sound as of tiny anvils struck by gnome-like hammers, some kind of tree toad, or night bird; and then a kind of cough or sneeze made by an animal trotting along the path far off, below the town. He wondered what kind of animal it was and what made it sneeze. With attention concentrated on sounds it was difficult not to imagine them. In the distance what must surely be an imaginary horse seemed to be cantering.

Then he switched his attention to smells and got once more the damp feeling of the earth and the smell of green things growing; the near, safe odor of just plain dog, and the strong, familiar scent of native that meant that Ngyikh was not far off. Jerry was glad of his closeness, for the night seemed very big and black and very close too.

Then again came the aching need to move. At the moment he wanted, more than anything,

something to lean his back against. He was irritated, too, by a couple of insects that seemed to be exploring beneath his shirt, and he tried hard not to think of them lest he simply have to scratch.

In front of him the open space grew slowly clearer in the increasing light of the moon, but still silent and empty. Still empty . . . still? Jerry's heart missed a beat, and then went on, hammering so loudly he was sure it must be overheard. A frozen feeling stole over him. And then he forgot about himself, for the place so recently empty was now humping itself up, the dark ground taking shape with the objects stealing through it—ghostly objects, heavy in the shoulders, thinning away to meagre hindquarters . . . almost the size of young donkeys in this deceptive light.

He could make out five now, and more seemed crowding in behind them along the narrow game trails.

Jerry suddenly snapped into action. His rifle spoke twice. Two of the ghostly forms collapsed.

Saving his magazine in case of the charge which might follow, he slipped in shot after

Ghostly objects...the size of young donkeys in this

deceptive light..

shot. Seven he counted in less than seven seconds . . . there was no time to sight . . . bullets had to be pumped into that torrent of gray . . . feverishly he worked the trigger in automatic fire from the magazine, standing up to fire now.

Shol had leaped forward in heroic counter-attack to save his master. Ngyikh, shouting a piercing war-cry, stabbed and stabbed again with invisible spear, a strange unearthly figure in the moonlight, seeming to tower giant-like as he leaped and lunged.

Then Jerry was hurled to the ground, rifle jerked from his grasp, and a foul smell seemed to choke him. He tried to get up but couldn't move. Heard shouts . . . surely in

the Zanta speech—and the sound of horses' hoofs again.

Then a glare of light struck him and he knew he must be dead.

Someone lifted the weight off him and he grabbed for his rifle and stood up, staggering.

Zanta men were everywhere, lighting grass torches, hastily plucked and put together, and finishing off the wounded hyenas with spears and axes. Someone had lifted a dead hyena from where it had fallen on top of Jerry.

And in the middle of the mêlée sat his father on the big gray horse, looking anxiously about him. Then he caught sight of Jerry, leaped his horse over a dead animal, and dismounted beside the boy.

"Gosh, what a life you lead, Jerry!" he laughed, but his voice sounded queer to the boy, whose nightmare feeling was beginning to disappear.

"I got your note," Mr. McLeod continued after a moment, as they stood watching the busy scene about them. "So I made straight for home. Then I heard your firing and turned off to help. Not damaged?"

Jerry shook his head. Words wouldn't come yet.

Ngyikh appeared out of nowhere and spoke earnestly to Jerry, pointing to the dead hyenas.

"Could you tell the Zantas that the hyenas belong to Ngyikh, Dad?" Jerry asked. "I promised him any I shot."

Jerry's father gave a sharp order.

"Now that that little matter is fixed," he suggested, "could you introduce me to your friend Ngyikh? He's never been at home when I've tried to see him. Maybe if he thinks I'm a friend of yours it will be all right!"

Father and son grinned at each other. Ngyikh, hearing his name, grinned too.

"Oh, hurrah! Here's Shol!" The huge dog, torn and breathless but very happy, came back from the pursuit of a last flying hyena.

"You might tell Ngyikh that the Zantas will bring all the dead hyenas to our house tonight, and that in the morning I'll personally superintend their delivery to his own doorstep."

Dad turned and mounted, then from horseback gave the necessary orders, while Jerry struggled with the Wilderim speech to make

Ngyikh understand. He did, or at least the old man got the idea.

"And he needn't worry about the Zantas attacking them any more. I'll fix that up," said Dad. "Now the next thing for both of us is food and bed. Give your rifle to one of the boys and slip up behind me. You can tell me the details of this little party of yours as you go home."

But five minutes later, when Dad felt a heavy weight on his back, he looked cautiously behind him. Jerry was sound asleep in the saddle, his head on his father's shoulder.

ENTER BLENKINSON

CHAPTER IX

ENTER BLENKINSON

JERRY was looking over the school catalog that had arrived that day by mail-runner. It was for no fault of the catalog or the school it represented that Jerry grunted hearty disapproval. Probably this school was in every way as good as the one that his father and grandfather had been to; but—and that was the point—it *wasn't* that particular school, the school for which Jerry

had been entered almost as soon as he was born. Dad just hadn't enough money to send him there, it had turned out.

He cut a great golden-hearted pawpaw in two and took out the seeds, then passed half the fruit to his father, who was reading the official part of the mail.

"Thanks very much, Jerry," said Dad. "What do you think of this?" he handed across the breakfast table a crested official memorandum.

Jerry stopped scooping at the pawpaw and read with interest. It was a note from the high official in the distant coast town, where lay the seat of government. It put Jerry's father and all the Division unreservedly at the disposal of one Ricardo Augustus Blenkinson . . . here followed several letters which Jerry knew meant learned degrees . . . who wished particularly to study the more obscure tribes of West Africa. Among these tribes was mentioned Jerry's newest pet, the Wilderim people.

The note, plus a little pawpaw juice, was returned across the table. The two looked at each other, the boy rather bored. But Dad grinned cheerfully.

"It's always that way, Jerry. As soon as you get a people settled down and trusting you, the Higher Powers are sure to want to increase the tax, or send in a lot of investigators, or put all the villagers in long wrappers, or something."

The boy, too, was philosophical, and turned immediately to practical considerations. "When is this chap due?" he asked, waving a spoon towards the memorandum.

His father looked at the paper. "Nothing to say here, but judging from the date it was written, he might arrive any time. He can use the rest house in the village, but I do hope he brings along a bed. Remember the last visitor didn't have anything but a teapot and quinine?"

Jerry grinned again. "Oh, gosh, and we've got practically nothing in the house. Mother won't be home for another week." He rose from the table. "Excuse me, please, Dad. I'd better hustle off and see the cook, and after that try to shoot some food."

His father nodded absent-mindedly. He was again busy with the papers the mail had brought.

The cook, a filed-tooth, fierce-looking savage, who wore white duck trousers and went by the

name of Aloysius, had only one objection to visitors.

"If we no catch meat, Massa Jerry, how we be fit for cook 'em?" he remarked, showing all his sharp-pointed teeth in a grin.

"That's all right. I'll fix that," said the boy and quoted a native proverb: "If the rains do not come, how shall a man find thatch for his roof?"

He made off whistling towards the workshop, a tiny mud-walled room where Jerry remodelled clocks, made over guns, and did the general small repairs that always needed doing about a household many miles from the nearest railroad. Here, suspended on strings from the roof for safety from white ants, were two long rolls of very thin paper. He took these down, unrolled them slowly and examined them with loving care. They were the proud results of almost a week's hard labor. You never knew in this country when a thing might be eaten over night, vanishing as though it had never been, or be gummed to a mess by some sticky nest-building insect. Inch by inch he inspected it, but all seemed whole and sound. As carefully he rolled

the paper up again and tied each roll with a string at both ends. From a corner he took eight sticks made of the lightest wood he had been able to find. These, too, he examined before putting them into the bundle. Then he slipped a big, tightly coiled drum of thin native twine into the front of his shirt and, taking his sun-helmet and rifle, went out across the blazing sunlight of the compound.

As he emerged from the gate in the mud wall about the garden Shol appeared as if from nowhere. He had been getting in a little quiet hunting on his own while the two humans had breakfast, but "Don't send me back, Jerry," his wagging tail and pricked ears seemed to say. "I won't go off after rock rabbits. I'll do everything you tell me . . ."

"Right-o. Come along," and boy and dog started towards the hills of the Wilderim people.

It was still early and the sun not yet very hot. From time to time Jerry stood still to test the air with a wetted forefinger, rather anxiously, too, for he must have a fairly strong breeze. But gradually it seemed to rise, as it generally did in the morning, and by the time the two had

reached the foothills the wind was all he could hope for. He could hear the harsh, rusty-pump grating of some guinea-fowl in the bush. Shol forgot his promise and wanted to get at them straight away, but picking his way between the scrubby little trees and the boulders that had rolled down from the hillside, Jerry called to the dog to follow, and came at length to a flat, naturally cleared space with nothing higher than tufts of long grass to break the surface. He stopped here to try the air again, and noting that it was satisfactory began to unpack the paper and sticks, again with the utmost care. It was not easy to handle the long, odd-shaped sheets of paper in the wind. He wished now, almost, that he had set up the kite at home; but then it would have been difficult to maneuver safely through thorns and bushes.

He found he had miscalculated somewhat, and a couple of joints would not fit into place. These he lashed with twine, loading the opposite side with an equal weight of lashing. In the end he got it mounted and held it, jumping and fluttering, on the ground with his feet. Then he slipped off his light sweater and put it down on

one end of the kite. He made Shol, to his very evident disgust, lie on it to hold the end down.

Where to attach the double string was the greatest problem. Two spots had already been marked on the bottom rib of the kite and in theory they were correct. But *would* they be? Carefully he tied on the twine, extending the strings along the ground to where they joined each other, then measured with his eyes the angle at which the kite should rise. So far, so good.

He straightened up a moment to admire his handiwork, then looked around him. In front rose the boulder-strewn Wilderim hills, silvery gray in the morning sun, with here and there a plant growing in a crevice or a gnarled tree showing blackly green against the light background of the rocks. It was these hills that presented the problem. He had flown kites before, but always in a horizontally flowing wind. Here, where the hills deflected the air upwards, at what angle should he make it fly? He had wanted to start it further away and bring it towards the hills, as once it was up the higher air would not be so full of eddies and pockets; but this

had proved impossible since all trails had, somewhere, small overhanging trees.

Well, he must do the best he could. He reeled out the string to the windward end of the clearing, ordering Shol to get away from his job as paperweight, and picked up the kite and carried it to the leeward end, the end nearest the hills. The first effort to launch it was not successful. Running rapidly backward toward the rising kite, which was already some twelve feet up, Jerry forgot about the dog. There was a crash. Shol, bored and puzzled, had stood his ground and Jerry cannoned backward into him. The kite came to rest without damage but the boy got up rather annoyed—only to burst out laughing, for Shol, who had retired a few paces, was sitting on his haunches, his face registering reproachful disapproval of a master who faced in one direction and then rapidly and without warning ran in another!

The second effort was completely successful. The kite lifted its weight immediately and Jerry could scarcely pay out fast enough. It swung and dipped ominously for a moment, but at a slight tug on the string it straightened and rose

higher. Jerry paid out again and again, then took a turn of the string about a small bush and stood watching, hands in pockets, with justifiable pride in his work.

Fluke or skill, he had certainly hit it off this time. Intentionally he had shaped it like a great bird, and then as an after-thought had shaded off its underside with water colors. Of course it was about five times lifesize, but that didn't show up in the air, where you couldn't tell its distance from earth. For a time it would poise motionless, then make a swift dive and recover itself, very much like a hawk or an eagle.

He watched it a little, then remembered the matter of his promise to Aloysius. Taking up his rifle he called to Shol and went in the direction of the guinea-fowl's rusty call. The kite could test itself for half an hour or so, and he would recover it on his way home.

It was nearing noon when Jerry got back to the compound, the guinea-fowl swinging at his belt, somewhat to the detriment of his shorts; the kite, once again a mere matter of paper and wood, under his arm. He stopped short at the

gate and Shol drew closer too, to gaze suspiciously.

Two huge motor trucks, big at least for these bush roads, stood opposite the door of the house. Now Jerry had something of the primitive in him: anything he didn't quite understand he circled round and approached with caution. Accordingly he swung around, apparently without aim, through the servants' gate in the wall, and deposited his kite in the workshop, and gave the guinea-fowl to the beaming Aloysius.

Then he went along to the school window, through which he had heard voices, and stood there to look and listen. His father, wearing a sun-helmet, was standing in the doorway talking to a stranger, another white man. The stranger was speaking as Jerry came up, and must have but just arrived.

"Doubtless, Mr. McLeod, you have already been told of my coming. His Honor has informed me that you will supply me with everything I wish."

"Yes," replied Jerry's father briefly in a tone that his son understood, and grinned at.

"None the less," the stranger waved his arm

grandly towards the two trucks with their native drivers, "I come with a trifle of baggage."

"There's a rest house for you in the native town," said Dad; then relenting a little, "but I hope you will dine with me. Though my wife is away, my son and I will be glad to do the best we can for you."

"Thank you, yes," the stranger agreed, and climbed back into the truck. The roar of the engine drowned Dad's direction to the native driver, but they could find the rest house easily, in any case.

Jerry would have liked to see and hear more, for the man's appearance interested him. From dark spectacles, with the protecting blinder side-pieces, to heavy, high-laced marching boots, the man was a rack carrying all those useless and exaggerated articles such as tropical outfitters foist upon one. He had had a water bottle slung at his side, though Jerry had perceived native pottery water-coolers in the back of the truck. A long curtain of green cloth had hung pendent from the back of his extra-size sun-helmet, as protection for his neck, and his bush shirt was of the heaviest, red-lined tropical material, to keep

out the sun. Jerry was fascinated by the oddity of the creature. What manner of man could this be, and did they really dress like that in the Paris and London and New York he had read of?

After that nearly a week passed before much was heard of Mr. Blenkinson. The Wilderim hills were less than a two-hour trek from the Zanta village, but all that week the strange little man appeared to be busy repacking, reorganizing, as for a great journey into a distant wilderness. From time to time, when passing the rest house or walking through the village, Jerry caught sight of these elaborate preparations. Huge crates were being unfastened in the rest house compound, fastened up again, and again unfastened, as Blenkinson appeared to remember something more he wanted from within the complicated wrappings. Inseparable even in the earliest morning or at sundown from his helmet and the long curtain that draped it, the little man could be seen, half walking, half running from one end of the enclosure to the other, always shrieking something to one of his servants as he ran.

Jerry, whose methods of trekking were, from

After that, Jerry looked on from a distance.

long practice, of the simplest and easiest imaginable, more than once stopped on his way to watch these strange proceedings. That great bundle of something crated, and elaborately boxed within the crating, which took six staggering men to move it, when opened revealed what surely was a brass-knobbed bedstead. Two intricate red-lined tents he could swear to, with cotton cords and polished hardwood guy-runners. Jerry and his father—and even his mother—had never owned such luxury in their lives. If there had been no rest house in the particular village they had to visit, they had stayed overnight in a mud-walled, grass-thatched native hut and considered themselves lucky to have a roof over their heads and walls to keep out snakes and leopards, no matter how leaky the roof, how frail and rotten the walls.

But more marvelous even than the goods, nickel-trimmed and packed in innumerable shavings as they all seemed to be, was Blenkinson, their owner. He was always on the run, red-faced, perspiring, hurrying and worrying as no white man should in the tropics, shouting a fresh order each second so that his boys were

in a continual state of bewilderment. Jerry found himself frankly sorry for the man. One day he wandered in, said good-morning and offered his assistance.

The little man, annoyed perhaps at just having hit his thumb with a hammer, straightened up and looked at the somewhat tousled, very nonchalantly clad boy who was watching him with amusement in his gray eyes.

"If I needed the assistance of a little boy," said Mr. Blenkinson with formality, "I should no doubt ask for it."

After that Jerry looked on from a distance, more with amazement than with malice. There seemed no way he could help.

But one morning, amidst a scene of indescribable confusion, the whole performing troupe departed with a hundred carriers, to the Wilderim hills. There was no motor road to the foothills, but along the bush paths they left a long trail of excelsior shavings and forgotten small articles.

Honestly Jerry could not blame either servants or carriers. By this time their simple minds must be completely fuddled. He picked

up some half dozen villagers to retrieve the strayed articles and, wandering out to the foothills, handed them over to Mr. Blenkinson—getting, of course, no thanks.

For a week after this exodus all was peace. Dad had time for his ordinary business, and Jerry himself almost forgot the strange little anthropologist, though he did sometimes wonder what was happening to him in his luxurious camp.

Then one day Mr. Blenkinson appeared again; a little worn, a little torn, his arms and face showing the ravages of hungry insects, a little thinner, and even more excitable. He clattered onto the veranda and called loudly for Jerry's father.

Mr. McLeod, who had some urgent correspondence to headquarters to get off by the mail that day, groaned, but went out courteously to meet him.

No, the visitor didn't want a drink. No, he wouldn't sit down. What he wanted to know was why, instead of helping him as McLeod had been ordered to do, he did nothing but connive

with the natives to put further difficulties in his way.

"And since, Mr. McLeod, MY BOOK—" Jerry could hear the capital letters as he said it —"is of supreme importance, as at least your superior officers are capable of understanding, you must realize that in giving me any assistance you are being honored by aiding in my great message to the world."

Jerry senior seemed a little bewildered by all this, but again drew forward a chair. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Blenkinson? If there is anything wrong I shall be glad to help."

Jerry stood in the background, ignored as only a small boy can be, but with a small boy's excellent opportunity to play audience. He was trying hard not to giggle. Dad did look funny.

"I doubt, Mr. McLeod, whether I can expect any aid from you." The visitor was still standing. "I am a seasoned traveler and capable of looking after myself. But what I require, indeed must insist upon, is that you will cease to place difficulties in my way. From the commencement it was all too plain that you did not wish me to go near the Wilderim people . . ." Jerry's

father had, indeed, not encouraged that journey. "I cannot guess your reasons," continued the irate little man, "nor do I seek to guess, discreditable though they may be. But what I insist—" here he pounded on the veranda railing, "I repeat, what I insist is that you withdraw your continual persecutions, now that I am embarked on my quest."

Jerry could not take his wondering gaze from this queer man. He had always been told he mustn't stare, but Mr. Blenkinson was quite unaware of the fascination he had for the boy.

What could the man mean? He stood there, his small eyes almost bulging with anger.

Dad too appeared to be wondering what he meant. His mouth opened twice before he could speak, then he said:

"Well, Mr. Blenkinson . . ." His tone was unpleasantly cool. "You speak very freely of persecution. If it exists elsewhere than in your own mind I should be glad to know in what form you find it."

"I haven't come to argue," declared the other, "but to tell you what you must do. I have already written Headquarters a report on your conduct

'and unless you see fit to mend your ways I shall stiffen it considerably—yes . . . considerably."

The mystery was getting no clearer. What did the little anthropologist think Dad had been doing? As though Dad would have time for any nonsense of whatever sort!

He was filling his pipe from the snakeskin pouch. Puzzled still, he pressed his point.

"From your manner I understand that you have suffered something, some annoyance. But frankly, I don't know what it's all about. Tell me what has happened. I may see some simple solution. At present I don't know whether you think I have shot at you or . . . poisoned your soup." He lit his pipe and paused hopefully.

Mr. Blenkinson was very full of his sorrows and tragedies, and very anxious to tell them. "Mr. McLeod, why should I—I who am a well-known traveler—why should I suffer such difficulties in the reorganization of my loads? None of the men would do what I told them to, even though I repeated it many times."

"Why should they?" thought Jerry, for the man always spoke in English, a language the natives never heard.

"They packed the flatiron next to my shaving mug, one which I greatly valued, moreover, and since it is broken I have had great difficulty in shaving."

Dad's face was perfectly straight still. Jerry looked to be sure.

"And my red woolen bed slippers, which have gone with me even to Thibet—they are lost now, completely lost."

Jerry could have told him where they had strayed. Only two days before he had seen one of the minor Elders at the Crocodile Pool wearing two huge bright red pendants on a leather string about his neck, flapping like enormous amulets against the brawny black chest of their proud wearer. Jerry didn't laugh either.

"How could the native mind know that I attached especial importance to these? No, Mr. McLeod, I see the machinations of a whiteman in these persecutions, subtle as they are."

But there remained depths beyond depths, horrors beyond horrors. Though Mr. Blenkinson still insisted on standing, the better to vent his indignation, Jerry senior sank into a com-

fortable chair and took some time to relight his pipe, sending up a convenient smoke screen for his face, while his son sneaked off behind the visitor to perch on the veranda rail. This was good, this was great!

In a voice that, to Jerry, seemed close to laughter his father spoke cautiously. "Is there anything more—er—Mr.—er—Blenkinson?"

Their visitor was now well into his stride. "More? Yes, yes. Much more. There is no need, since you are behind it, to describe the details. Let me confront you with but one word." He waved an angry fist. *"Lizards!"* he raged.

"Lizards?" repeated Dad weakly. Jerry, like a somewhat simple chorus, murmured perplexedly, "Lizards?"

"Yes, lizards. I have already reported on this to your Senior Officer. If you wish to withdraw your opposition and cease these childish jests at my expense I shall duly report that you have mended your ways. But that is all I can do for you. Keep this in mind. Good-morning!" He turned, bumped his head against the low doorway of the veranda, and stalked down the blazing drive.

Jerry looked at the place he had stood and turned to his father. "I say, Dad, lizards?"

Dad uncrossed his legs and rose. "Yes, lizards. Come on, Jerry," with a weary smile. "Let's have some lunch."

THE TOTEM

CHAPTER X
THE TOTEM

JERRY was out shooting again just a few days after this. He had found that the new scheme worked excellently. Though the string of the kite was tethered at the foot of the hill, the kite itself was a wheeling, birdlike spot which hovered over the sunlit rocks and hills above. It had taken the boy a quarter of an hour to pay it out and maneuver it to its present height. Now that

it was there, he could turn his attention to the guinea-fowl.

Shol had learned to interest himself in the kite. Lately the kite business had become almost as much a preliminary to shooting birds as putting on a sun-helmet, or taking one's rifle or gun. It was, indeed, to Shol's way of thinking, rather an improvement on the old method of hunting, because now he was allowed to dash forward, barking, scaring a clump of guinea-fowl into fits and delighting himself exceedingly.

This time they worked back some distance from the foot of the hills, Shol sniffing eagerly this side and that, Jerry—hands in pockets, .22 under his arm—sauntering casually behind. Possibly owing to the Blenkinson encampment with its noisy hordes of carriers and servants, game seemed scarce. At last the dog made a dive into the thick bush, and a guinea-fowl flapped frantically forth and settled on a branch of a tree above their heads. It was unwilling to fly out into the open because of that eagle-like thing hovering in the sky—Jerry's kite, in fact. For a moment the bird rasped and cursed at the dog, then Jerry put a .22 bullet neatly through it and

it dropped without a flutter. Shol retrieved with his usual smug look of "See what a good boy am I!" and Jerry hung their dinner dish at his belt.

It wasn't much fun, he thought to himself, this way of shooting; it was too easy. It had been rather more fun when the birds flew out into the open, scuttled up the hill and hid among the rocks. The kite had been intended to stop their

doing this, but it had worked almost too well. He decided that from now on he had better not use it when he was out just for sport; but he would keep it on hand still, since it would come in useful when he had to shoot for the pot.

He turned and went slowly back to the foot of the hill where the kite was tethered, and started to reel it in. This was a tedious process as he had no windlass and there was much surrounding scrub. Usually the moment when the kite was making its final landing was one of tense anxiety—in the eddies near the ground it could so easily nose-dive to the earth and tear itself into fragments. But this time Jerry didn't really care. Perhaps for that reason he took less trouble than usual, and Shol had the shock of his life as the huge thing, with its eight-foot wingspread, hurtled heavily to earth, almost upon his tail.

Perfunctorily Jerry examined it. Yes, broken to bits. It would be easier and more fun to make a new one if he ever wanted it, than to repair this tangle of sticks and paper. He reeled up the remaining string and gave the remains of the kite a push with his foot.

Somehow this seemed a tame end to an adventure; it left him feeling a little blank and empty. There surely ought to be something amusing to do. Then he remembered Blenkinson's camp, which was on the hill not far above him which he had not yet seen. A visit there ought to prove amusing.

He started up the hill, Shol at his heels, faintly puzzled. Jerry wondered how the little anthropologist had fared. It was pretty hard going even if one were young and spry. The climb snatched at your breath. Blenkinson, straight from the city and dressed like the White Knight in "Alice in Wonderland," must have suffered quite a bit. Jerry was still puzzled over that lizard business and thought that if he hung about the camp a bit he might discover something from the native carriers. A few of his Zanta friends were among these, since the little man hadn't been able to bring enough for his great loads and had hired additional help from the nearest tribe.

As he went along he took a few shots at rock rabbit, getting two of them. Soon after this—just as he had been expecting would happen—

his friend Ngyikh turned up from nowhere in particular, to be the grateful recipient of the game. (Jerry didn't eat rock rabbit, anyhow!)

Since the boy had had his adventures with the hyenas he had learned quite a bit more of the Wilderim speech and could now talk to these people comfortably, if not with remarkable accuracy. Salutations were a simple affair in this primitive tribe. Jerry, handing over one of the rock rabbits, explained where he was bound for —the camp of the Whiteman.

"Whiteman?" The term seemed to set the native off. Angry but frightened, Ngyikh burst into a torrent of speech. Jerry could scarcely follow it. He laid his rifle on a convenient rock and sat down. This was worth listening to!

He asked a neat question. Ngyikh halted his outpouring to answer, then burst forth afresh.

Jerry put his arms around his knees and laughed and laughed, rocking back and forth on the stone, the tears streaming down his cheeks, till Shol thrust an inquisitive nose into the back of his neck. Then, wiping his eyes on his shirtsleeve, Jerry handed the tribesman the other rock rabbit, and even the guinea-fowl!

"Take them," he said, as his emotion drove every language but English out of his head. "Oh, gosh! You deserve them! Now come along and tell my father."

Only half understanding, Ngyikh followed him home. They found Jerry's father smoking a before-lunch pipe at his office desk, the usual batch of papers before him.

"I say, Jerry. I'm glad you've come. I think I'm going quite mad. I'd like another opinion on this. What in—I mean, what do you make of this?"

A letter of three full foolscap pages fluttered in his hand. Jerry told the Wilderim man to wait, and took the papers, wondering.

"You might as well read it all," said Jerry's father. "I'm dashed if I can make head or tail of it."

The boy read a bit, then looked up with a grin, threw his hat in a corner and sat down to read further.

"Oh, gosh, but this is funny!" He picked up the first sheet and reread it. "He's got it all down. The High Official must have just copied Blenkinson's last letter." Then in a moment—

"Fifty-three dead lizards, the man says he found in his boxes. Well, he was accurate anyway. From what I've heard I should have thought there had been more; but perhaps some of them turned up after he wrote the letter. And he hasn't mentioned the totem marks at all. Wonder what he made of those!" Jerry was still chuckling as he read and talked.

"Jerry, are you going mad too?" cried Dad, grasping him by the hair. "Explain all this, if you can."

"Ouch!" protested Jerry, wriggling. "I'll be good and tell all of it if you'll let go. It's a bit hard to explain. You see, he got mixed up with a totem. Look here—I'll call Ngyikh, who can tell you the whole story, though it's quite a different one from Blenkinson's!"

No doubt because whitemen's houses were strange to him, the Wilderim man squatted down near the door. Jerry straddled a chair and Dad sat back and relit his pipe.

"Now," he cried, "shoot! And on a clear translation depends my hope of regaining sanity."

So Jerry translated as the old man gave his story.

A portent had appeared. A bird, the totem bird of the Wilderim tribe, had come one day to hover above the hills. All the people had seen it, watched its steady climb into the skies. Then terror had filled them, young and old, men and women. For a vulture rose from somewhere and circled after it, and the totem bird was many times the size of the vulture! Then had the people fallen down and beaten their breasts. For the bird was indeed no ordinary bird, but a giant such as appears only when terrible disaster is about to fall upon the tribe.

("By the by," interpolated Jerry, "that totem bird was really my kite!")

"Then we took counsel," said the old man, "and saw by many clear signs that the white stranger with the red face who had arrived at your village was the danger of which our totem warned us."

("I haven't found out, yet, how they got the two ideas connected," Jerry commented. "I suppose it came from the fact that the two unusual occurrences happened at the same time." His father nodded.)

The next phase was easier to follow. Blenkin-

son duly reached the Wilderim village, his arrival seeming to confirm the fears of the tribe. A council was held. Some were for killing the stranger. And indeed this might have been carried out but for a bright idea that occurred to one of the older men. Their totem bird, it seems, lives on lizards.

"They are very acceptable to our Totem," the man explained to Jerry and his father. "So, because the bird was angry with us by reason of the stranger's coming, we thought it wise to appease his wrath by a sacrifice of lizards. We caught many, small ones and big ones, as a sacrifice, and then we put them into the boxes of the Whiteman with the red face. This we did so that the Totem should understand clearly, and take away the threat."

("You see," commented Mr. McLeod, ironically, to Jerry, "you see how simple, how easy to understand, is the native way of thinking! I recall that Blenkinson told me as much, at our first interview.")

"This proved good," the Wilderim man went on, "for the threatened evil did not fall upon us. But it remained in the sky, and we still

feared. Then we made three of our oldest men observe a fast. Almost they died before they found a solution. But on the night when they told us, and so were again permitted to eat, we went down into the Whiteman's camp with paint made of red earth.

"Everywhere we made the mark of the totem bird, with wings outstretched—upon the tent, upon the ground, upon the boxes, upon the clothes he had taken off, even upon the soft

thing he lay upon while he was asleep.—And now, all is well!"

Jerry's father rose and reached for his sun-helmet. "If that's all, I had better go and try to explain to Blenkinson," he said to Jerry, who was bidding farewell to Ngyikh on the veranda. The boy turned with a grin.

"Don't bother, Dad," he said. "What this man meant by 'All is well' was that Blenkinson has already bolted! He cleared out yesterday, and when he passed here he was still going strong. He ought to be near a railway by now!"

MORGAN'S EYE

CHAPTER XI

MORGAN'S EYE

"SALAAM *alaikum!*"

It was Jerry who sang out this gruff greeting as he pulled up Cabbage Patch before the grass shelter of Morgan, the foreman of works. He waved to Shol to stay back and not give away the jest; then untied from his saddle the dead bird fastened to it—a greater bustard. His loud cough in native fashion was a further effort to attract the attention of somebody inside.

An English voice was heard shouting huskily. "Hi! Yaro—Cook—somebody—find out who it is out there, and if he's got a letter, take it. If not, tell him I'll be out *vanzu.*"

A servant boy, barefooted, in discarded trousers of his master's and a gaudy pink vest, came slowly into view; then, recognizing Jerry, grinned and hastened his pace.

"Receive this *tuje,*" directed Jerry. "It was shot but an hour since, so should not be cooked till next sunrise."

The bird, which looked like a miniature ostrich, thudded to the ground, and Cabbage Patch, the big black stallion, catching a sniff of something dead, reared and pirouetted. Jerry jammed his knees into the saddle, took a firmer grip of his rifle and prepared to ride out the storm. Twice the servant tried to get hold of the bird, but each time a fear of the flailing hoofs drove him back. As he made a third and successful attempt, the clatter of knife and fork dropping on a tin plate came from inside the hut and a short, very wide figure came to the door of the shelter.

"Hi! You there! Is this a circus? The dust's

getting all over everything! In my soup, in my tea, on my bread . . . Gor, if it ain't Jerry! Come on in and have a spot of food." The red face beamed delighted hospitality. "I'm having lunch early so as to get back to work on the bridge."

Cabbage Patch, his hysterics over, allowed himself to be led off as he nuzzled the pink shoulder of the "boy." Jerry shouted directions about watering and unsaddling, while Shol, on his hindlegs, put one huge paw on each of the stocky little foreman's shoulders and made desperate attempts to lick the broad red face.

"Hey! hey!" shouted Morgan in mock terror. "Call off this young elephant before he eats me." Gently he pounded the dog's chest with his massive, scarred fists, then lifted him bodily, laid him on his back in the dust and pretended to sit on him. Shol lay still, panting and grinning.

Morgan was an old friend. At one time a ship's carpenter, he seemed to have been all over the world and could relate thrilling tales of gold-mining, pearl-fishing and even bush-ranging. Some of Jerry's first memories were of this squat figure with a black patch over the missing eye,

and he remembered his own childish belief that this man was the famous old buccaneer, Henry Morgan, in person. Some of the glamour had disappeared, in Jerry's eyes, now that the black patch had given place to a glass eye of a slightly deeper shade than its fellow.

More knives and forks were brought, and Jerry, with his knees under the rough trestle table, had a box for a seat. There was little else for furniture in the simple shelter of bush sticks and grass matting. A stand for some surveying instruments, probably a Dimpy level, stood in one corner, and in another some headpans, like iron wash-basins with handles, reached in a stack to the roof. The ink bottle and papers, hastily swept from the table to make room for Jerry's meal, lay in the loose sand of the floor beneath, where some leather-cased instruments hung from the ceiling sticks. The only decoration was a sunprint drawing of the Langai bridge pinned to a drawing board.

The old foreman saw Jerry looking around and explained: "Not much here. You see, I'm supposed to live up in the native town. But I

put this shack up for lunch and breakfast so I could stay near the work. And with one side of the place open I can sit here and eat and still watch the gangs down below." He lifted a pair of binoculars that lay beside his tin plate. "Sometimes I sleep here at night too, when there's a bright enough moon to work night shifts. Y'see, those fools sending us the wrong pumps for the caissons slowed us down a lot. If we haven't got up to the decking level before the floods come with the first rains, we'll be held up six months—till the river drops again; and that'll cost a lot in material and work."

His good eye turned anxiously to Jerry while the glass one looked sternly down the slope as if it still watched the natives working below.

Jerry nodded, his mouth full of food. Morgan pulled a pipe out of his right trouser pocket and put it in the left. He had finished his meal before Jerry came. Now, as though by a conjuring trick, he brought the pipe out again, filled with tobacco. It was characteristic of the old adventurer not to bother about a pouch, but to keep his tobacco loose in his pocket. Jerry had often

seen him fill and light a pipe with his left hand while he measured up or used a tool with his right.

"But about these Zanta men, you got to come down, Jerry." With his little finger he pressed down the glowing weed in the cracked, lopsided bowl. "They works like sin when I'm lookin' at 'em. But when I leaves 'em—and I can't be on the job all the twenty-four hours—they knocks off work just as soon as I'm out of sight, and sits down."

Jerry had arrived at the custard and pawpaw stage. The worst of his hunger satisfied, he was prepared to show some interest. He paused in the task of digging huge chunks of golden flesh from the green rind of the fruit, and looked up.

"Y' see, it's this way, Jerry. Those yam-fed southerners haven't got the strength of your Zantas, but they got the sense to know I can measure up their work, so they work a bit even if I'm not there. I put a southern headman over your lads, either to keep them at work, or to tell me when they don't. But they threw spears at his feet, pretendin' that his Whiteman's boots were strange animals that they were afraid of. *And* I

haven't seen him since. He drew his pay and didn't even stop to eat."

Jerry choked and spluttered at this picture of the well-meaning but over-civilized native of the south who had aroused the simple sense of humor of the Zantas. But of course it wouldn't do, all the same. He picked up the binoculars. Resting his elbows on the table for greater steadiness he watched the gangs at work, while the foreman chatted from behind a comfortable haze of smoke.

"Y'see, we got to keep up to schedule with our job. The wrong pumps being sent up put us back; and that poor cement, and the girder cement members that's cut wrong, they're going to set us back some more. So we got to save time on the foundation and approach work."

Much as a man will wipe a pair of spectacles he took out his glass eye and polished it on a silk handkerchief.

The boy waved the binoculars. "Do you catch many of them loafing when you use these?" He never asked idle questions, and Morgan looked up with interest.

"Why, yes! And your Zanta friends can't un-

derstand it. They know nobody dare split on them, and when I come back and know who's been standing about in the shade smoking a pipe, and who's been sitting down scratching hisself for half an hour, they're puzzled." He gave his eye a final polish with the handkerchief and replaced it.

It wasn't the first time Jerry had seen this done, but he stared as though he were watching a conjuring trick. Continued to stare . . . then . . .

"Gummy green Eliza! I've got the trick to make the Zantas work! Let's go down and see the bridge, and I'll tell you all about it. I do hope you'll agree to it!"

Jerry worked fast. The very next day runners went through the Zanta tribe, and before dawn of the second day the Elders who were of the High Council of the Moon had each received a summons to attend. There was much calling for fires to be kindled so that cramped old limbs might be made supple for the journey. But by midday Jerry found them all assembled around the pool of the Sacred Crocodile. M'gok, the Chief Priest, sat at the boy's right hand. In front

of him in the pool lay the sacred beast itself, his upturned nostrils and wicked little eyes just showing above the glassy, smooth water. Jerry took the third oath, then spoke.

"O People of the Zanta tribe, Councilors of the Moon, you asked me to rid you of the strangers who came into your country. You took my counsel and were free of them, so that they no longer overrun your country and cheat your people. Is it truth that I speak?"

A murmur around the edge of the pool gave assent.

"My next counsel to you was to send your young men to work on the Langai bridge, that steel path which the Whiteman makes in order that the river shall not eat of men each rains. This counsel I gave so that your villages might be enriched by the money the young men would earn, but still more that the young men might learn of people and of the world. You have a saying. . . ." Jerry dropped into the nasal sing-song of the Zanta story-teller. "The frog said, 'This hippopotamus will crush me some day as I lie asleep. What can I do? He is too big for me to kill, so I must swallow him alive!' "

Harsh, wheezing sounds broke from the ancient audience and put Jerry off his stride for a moment. But it was only the shriveled laughter of people who had almost forgotten how to be amused at anything. The joke, however, served its turn. There was a rustle of dry leather loincloths as their owners turned to listen.

M'gok rose to his feet. "The world is the big hippopotamus, and we, the Zanta people, are the small frog. The frog could not kill the hippopotamus, neither can we forever keep out the world and its people and things which would enter our tribe, our country."

The old man, pleased at his shrewdness in guessing the application of the story, was now, Jerry observed ruefully, calmly appropriating the boy's speech!

"Therefore, using the words of folly to point the thoughts of wisdom, I say to you, 'Go forth and swallow the world, lest it come in, and finding you defenceless, swallow you.' Therefore, I say, 'Let our young men go forth to the Langai bridge and learn!' "

Jerry saw that he must wait yet a little longer to have his say. Meanwhile he watched the

assemblage of undoubted years and reputed wisdom, to see how it would take the idea. M'gok, he knew, was with him, even in this latest scheme which they had already discussed together.

"Therefore we sent our young men forth, but one by one they return saying that One Eye has driven them back because they will not work. They are sad, for while old One Eye watched they worked. Only when he ate or slept or ceased to watch did they cease to labor. And they say that work done when no man sees, is foolish labor, for it will please no one, since no one sees. Is this not so?"

There was guarded assent. The Elders were glad of any money their sons and grandsons might earn, but it was also a convenience to have them at home.

The Chief Priest had now reached his main point, the point that had brought Jerry here and had gathered the Elders from the villages. Jerry made a desperate effort to take the stage, but the old man would not be deprived of his speech and his audience.

"To me and to you, in our wisdom, are known things that are hidden from the young men of

our people. In their ignorance they speak of 'One Eye,' but we who know the ways of the Whiteman know that no Whiteman would give up his eye except for another with which he may see further."

This was a new way of accounting for Morgan's glass eye that had not occurred to Jerry. But if M'gok chose to believe it . . .

"This new eye of his is of a clearness and shiningness surpassing all other eyes that I have seen, and always is the red-faced Whiteman polishing it, that it may see better. Tell your young men, therefore, to work always, even when the eye is at a distance, for only thus will they please the Whiteman and earn much money."

Jerry could not have deceived his old friend M'gok to this extent. But since the Chief Priest had deceived himself, and most successfully put the idea across to the Elders of the Zanta people, somehow it seemed different.

Impassively the boy returned the unwinking gaze of the holy crocodile.

"Humbugs, both of us, eh?" He addressed the Repository of Souls in English, and threw him a piece of meat from his haversack. "I don't

want to be sent Home to school, yet I send these Zanta boys off to the Langai bridge for a sort of education." Then M'gok having ended, Jerry shifted to the Zanta tongue.

"O Priest and People, M'gok in his wisdom has told you more than I could say. But much good and much riches will come to the Zanta people if his words are heeded. My counsel is given. I go."

SCHOOL FOR YOUNG ZANTAS

CHAPTER XII

SCHOOL FOR YOUNG ZANTAS

NEXT morning Jerry was again on his way to the Langai bridge. Dad rode ahead with the executive engineer, who had come to inspect Morgan's work. Morgan, who had been called in to meet his "boss," now rode alongside Jerry, a black patch over his eye, his stocky figure and brick-red face a striking and amusing contrast to that of his thin, pale senior, in front.

At dinner the night before, egged on by Mr. McLeod, Morgan had been at his best with humorous tales of adventure by sea and land. Whereas the others had traveled first-class on liners, Morgan had worked before the mast, or knocked about in leaky, overladen little tramps. It was difficult to think of the man as a bartender at a mining camp, or as a waiter at a famous Cairo hotel, but he seemed to have sandwiched those details in among many others.

The effect of Morgan's yarns had been unexpected and a bit dismaying. The engineer whom Morgan called his "boss" now turned in his saddle and spoke to Dad, his words blown back to Jerry's quick ears.

"I hadn't intended to come out here, as my time is valuable."

Jerry's father nodded doubtful assent, and the boy remembered that Dad had always said the harder a man worked, the more time he seemed to have for extra work.

"But I need not conceal from you that in my opinion—" he emphasized his words with a gesture of his right hand, then clutched cautiously at his reins again—"this country has now passed

the stage when such soldiers of fortune as this man Morgan can be of use. No reliable man of good character would have been driven to such a roving, uncertain life as his last night's stories pictured."

"I don't know that I agree." Dad's voice was cautious, and Jerry understood the reason. This young man was of a different department, and junior to Dad, but if he got annoyed he might take it out on Morgan. "A lot of people take to adventure as a pleasure, not of necessity because they can't earn a living any other way. And a life such as Morgan has had teaches resourcefulness—how to use makeshifts, how to get things done in ways that you'll not find in textbooks."

"Makeshifts—exactly! But solid work and getting the most out of natives is usually beyond such soldiers of fortune. That's why I changed my mind and came with you today to see what he has done. If I know my man, we shall find that because he has been away merely one night, his laborers will be idle, or absent."

Dad pressed his pony into a slow trot over the broken ground, and the speaker gave his atten-

tion to his mount. Jerry heard no more and hoped Morgan had heard nothing. But what an unfair test! No raw natives, as Jerry knew, could be relied on to work when there was no one watching. Of course they would slack! And Morgan would then be considered of no use at his job. How beastly unfair!

The boy turned in his saddle and caught sight of the broad face with the black patch over one eye. Then he seemed to remember something and grinned.

The day was hot and the going was bad. There were many rocks on the road, and, near the Langai River, were steep-banked, dry-bedded streams. Jerry felt hot enough but hoped he didn't resemble the young inspecting engineer, whose khaki drill jacket and breeches were black with perspiration.

He himself knew this country well from shooting over it. At Dad's instructions he led the party to a spot where they would be able to look down on the bridge works without coming into view of the gangs who worked below. It was no easy route, and the last hundred yards was an almost vertical bit of the river bank. Jerry's pony

tucked his feet together and seemed to slide down on his tail. Rather uncertainly the other three horses followed.

From the south the new motor road could be seen crossing through the dried-up yellow bush like a red scar on a sallow face. A cutting eased its descent down the river bank, but stopped there. Up to this point motor-lorries rattled and banged with their loads of ironwork, barrels of cement, and even down-country natives—artisans and their wives—drums of tar, planking for bridge decking. In the glaring yellow sand of the river-bed below, natives hurried in long lines like black ants on the march. In five main spots where the piers of the bridge were to be, the black lines converged. There, too, oil engines snorted, and five trickles of water from the caisson pumps made threadlike marks on the yellow sand till they joined and formed a small stream —a half-hearted stream that went perhaps fifty yards before blazing sun and thirsty sand destroyed it.

The executive engineer, Jerry noticed, saw little of this. He seemed too busy hanging on to his saddle with both hands. Only when they

came to more level ground did he loose his white-knuckled grip. Once they had dismounted and handed over their horses, he began to look around him.

It was blazing hot in the glaring, breezeless river-bed. As they picked their way through the débris of construction to where a matting roof supported on sticks gave some hope of shade and coolness, they passed long strings of natives, each with a basket of sand on his head. There was a strange air about the place, and the little group of white men caused none of the usual stir of excitement; in fact, they seemed scarcely to be noticed.

On the contrary, attention seemed to center on the upturned barrel in the shade of the matting sun-shelter. Basket men walked smartly with their loads and returned at a jog-trot. The drummers of each gang drummed frantic encouragement, for natives always work to the rhythm of drum beats, and trickles of sweat that could not have been raised since the Whitemen came in sight marked the bare brown backs and dusty legs. Thirsty men, calabashes in hand, rushed down to the trickling stream, and drank, then

with barbaric yells of enthusiasm, rushed back to their places in the toiling, shouting gangs.

It was a scene of incredible activity, and it halted the young engineer in his tracks. He saw a marvel that no amount of text-book knowledge could explain. But for all his inexperience he was a just man. He turned to the foreman.

"Morgan, I've never seen natives work like this, and they seem to have been doing it even when you were away. That run of concrete is fresh this morning, and the dampness of that spoil dump shows that it is fresh since yesterday."

The damp, fresh work certainly made a fine showing and could not possibly have been faked.

"You must have had something in your long experience that makes you able to handle natives this way. I'd like to sit in the shade a moment before I go around to look at the work in detail."

He moved towards the shelter and Jerry, slipping in hastily ahead of him, took something off the flat top of the upturned barrel and passed it to Morgan. It was smooth, shiny, and about the size of a very small egg.

The "Boss" sat down in the shade with a sigh of relief.

"Frankly, I am amazed beyond measure." He pushed his hat back on his head and, hands on knees, gazed at the busy scene. "I shall report to my superiors. There are only a few foremen who can make natives work like this at any time. But you are the only man I have ever known who can get them to work as well when you are away as when you have your eye on them."

"Well, Sir," said Morgan, polishing something round with his silk handkerchief as he replied, "in a manner of speaking . . . I *have* had my eye on them."

It was several minutes before Jerry could slip away to get a full explanation. He found a Zanta headman who explained the matter with simplicity.

"Son of the Whiteman, our Elders had told us of the power of the Eye. So when the red-faced one left it on the barrel, watching us, we knew that he still saw us and we were not deceived into idling." He grinned at Jerry, who grinned back. "And when the Zantas work," he explained further, "it is not meet that those of

other races should rest. We explained to them, but they would not understand. But when we beat them a little with our spear shafts, they believed. Though that one driving what they call a motor had to be beaten twice before his wheeled box would go with sufficient noise and speed." The dusty giant beamed with pride.

The Zantas had started well in their new school, Jerry reflected hopefully, as he went to rejoin his father. And just as hopefully he told himself that perhaps his own school, to which he must soon be going, wouldn't be so dull after all, in spite of his earlier misgivings.

ONE, TWO, THREE—FOUR DETECTIVES

CHAPTER XIII

ONE, TWO, THREE—FOUR DETECTIVES

SHOL, with ever-inquisitive nose, found the waterbottle first. It had dropped by the side of the road, and as Jerry turned it over with his toe a mixture of water and *gari,* native flour, dripped out. He gave a whistle of dismay. Something was wrong here, very wrong indeed. A native in this hot climate with its deadly sun will cling to his water-carrier as the most valuable part of his traveling kit.

Leaning the butt of his .320 Browning on the ground, he motioned Shol to stand still so that the tracks might not be confused, and, without moving his feet, searched carefully for any footprints that might explain the problem. But the road was covered with marks made by recent travelers. Jerry lifted the waterbottle and smelt it. The contents were fermented, which meant that they had been here for several days. So the tracks of recent passers-by would have nothing to do with the mystery.

He glanced up, frowning, and his eyes caught a glimpse of something red in the bush. Treading cautiously, his eyes on the ground, he made his way towards the object. Over a bit of low brushwood hung a red-striped blanket. Though of an uncommon pattern, it was such as natives can buy from the trading firms. Being a hunter, Jerry was a ready-made detective, and his methods would have met with the approval of Scotland Yard or the Sûreté. He first circled the blanket, examining it and the ground around it from every angle. It had been weeks since there was a wind strong enough to move a heavy blanket any distance, but the undergrowth was

too springy to retain any impression of the one-time wearer.

Then the blanket itself claimed his attention. A careful examination showed nothing of interest to the eye. His nose, however, gave him some information; there was a faint trace of cheap scent such as the native men as well as the women use, and the prevailing odor was of smoke. Obviously it was a sleeping blanket—new, too, and not a cheap one; not a thing that the owner would have thrown away, nor small enough to have been lifted by the wind and blown there.

Called in to aid, Shol could give no pointers, but he put up a hare which Jerry dropped in its tracks. The dog retrieved it, and the boy tied it to his belt with a loop of useful string.

Carefully then he folded the blanket, picked up the waterbottle, and scanned the sky. Not a vulture in sight. Funny, that! He put down the blanket and waterbottle and scratched his head with the foresight of his Browning. The blanket was too unusual and distinctive for a thief to steal, the calabash far too valueless. Even so, how did they come to be abandoned?

"Shol, old man, we've got to do a bit of thinking!"

The dog turned his huge head towards his master, prepared to co-operate.

"If you separate a man from his property, without taking the property away from him, how do you do it?"

Shol contemplated the question, then snapped vaguely at a fly as a steam-grab might try for a butterfly. Obviously he didn't know.

"I'll tell you," said Jerry triumphantly, picking up the blanket and gourd. "You take the man *from* the property! And, since there is no longer any slave-raiding or war, it looks as though the method must have been murder! Gummy green Eliza—*murder!*"

He looped the string carrier of the bottle over his left shoulder and the blanket over that to steady it, native-fashion, and they started down the road.

"So, Shol old fellow, we're going to the nearest village to ask if anyone remembers a man with a red blanket who must have passed this way not more than a week ago. If it was more, the waterbottle would have been dry by now;

and if it was less, the flour water wouldn't have been sour. If he went south we'll find news of him northwards. Let's try the nearest village to the south first."

It was an even chance whether the man had passed from south to north or the other way, but Jerry was in luck. By noon he had come within hearing distance of the Yashi market-place. For several yards before one could see the stalls, there were donkeys and traders under every tree, and the different calls of the vendors, the chatter of the marketeers, the occasional neigh of a horse, filled the air—or at any rate that part of the air which was not already occupied, indeed saturated, by smells. Jerry sniffed the rank odor of *daudawa,* of indigo dye, of cheap scents, as he made his way through the jostling, good-humored crowd, Shol close at his heels.

At the third stall from the turn in the road he found what he was seeking. A red-robed Native Administration Policeman leaned on his tall staff, and a number of dignified, white-robed Elders sat in a rough circle before a man in a green-embroidered robe and a large white tur-

ban—obviously the market chief, if not indeed the head of the village. Jerry, making his way forward, caught the great man's eyes and gave courteous salutation; a greeting not after the Whiteman's way (which is brief and formal) but as flowing and elaborate as the native costume itself. These were not his Zanta people, simple and unaffected, but Haussas, with their long tradition of Arab culture.

There was then a noticeable pause. Whitemen they had seen, but none who spoke their language as did this young one. Then, as the *dogeri,* in his red robe, returned greeting on behalf of his superior, Jerry advanced into the circle. The chief, in his battered deck-chair, bent forward.

"Welcome, Son of the Whiteman. You are he of whom we have heard, whose rifle and youth are talked of in the markets, and who is a ruler among the people to the north. Welcome, and again welcome!"

Jerry was not to be outdone. "Great is your knowledge of things distant, and much to be marveled at. Knowing this, I come to ask news of one who passed on the road but a few days ago —one who carried a red-striped blanket."

He indicated the one on his shoulder: "Is this known to you?"

Jerry gave a quick glance around the circle to note the effect of his news. No one seemed surprised or even interested. Obviously he was the first to report such information. One or two seemed about to speak, but waited in deference for the old chief, who spoke first.

"Five days ago one Audu Zaria went through, with a red-striped blanket, which he had bought at the railway." He looked around the circle of his courtiers for confirmation. "He carried a load of shillings," the deep voice of the red *dogeri* elaborated. "About two hundred and fifty pounds in all, so he said. He was taking it to the tin tributor who works in the hills above here."

Jerry put down the blanket and waterbottle. "These I found at a bend of the road by the cotton tree, at the eighth milestone north of here. Search, you, for the body and inform my father." He took up his rifle and prepared to leave. "Till a certain day, and Allah preserve you! I go to eat, then to find the murderer of Audu."

He turned away, and nearly fell over the foot

of a boy whom he knew well: one Gofo, the twelve-year-old grandson of the widow Nanek, who did the washing for Jerry's mother. He was dressed in a clean and obviously new white loin-cloth, with four nickel pennies fastened to his waist by a string that ran through their center holes. Clearly, from his money, he must have been sent marketing. And from his excitement he must have overheard Jerry's talk to the chief. He patted Shol, to hide a wide grin of delight; then turned to Jerry, his grin even wider, if possible.

"Permit that I join this hunt," he begged, hopping from one foot to the other in his eagerness. "See, I have both money and a knife!" With pride, hopefully, he displayed a funny little blade not more than four inches long which hung opposite the pennies.

Jerry looked him over. He hadn't quite intended to go in search of the murderer by himself. His words to the Chief had been a gesture, not to be taken too literally. Now he ought to get back home as fast as he could before sundown, lest his mother get anxious. All he had really expected to do was to inform people on the way,

and perhaps get a hand in things as a reward for his discovery.

But gosh, what an idea! Suppose he did take this murderer-hunt seriously! Suppose he succeeded! Dad couldn't very well say much *then,* could he?

Swiftly he recast his plans, inwardly thrilling to the new idea, but with a face impassive, as he seemed to sum up the qualities of the pleading Gofo.

He nodded solemnly. "It is permitted. Lead me first to a scribe. You shall first take a letter and return swiftly."

With a reed pen, dipped into the little leather-covered gourd which served as native inkpot, Jerry wrote his letter.

Manok—Tuesday.

DEAR DAD:

I've found what seems like a murder on the Manok road, but no murderer yet. It would be awfully fun if I could get him, wouldn't it? Shol is here and is going to help, but I don't want to use the people here, because some of them may be in it. I'm sending this letter by Gofo to ask if I may stay here and look around.

Could you ask Mother to send back my mosquito net? Audu Zaria is the man who has been murdered.

JERRY.

As soon as Gofo had gone hurrying along the road Jerry settled down to his problems. One was money. He had forgotten to ask his father to send some of the native shillings from the top drawer of his dressing table. Now it was too late to catch Gofo and alter the note, but he would need some if he were to have food and lodging for several nights. Gofo's fourpence wouldn't last long!

The other problem was how to catch a thief and murderer who had left no clues.

Jerry had his own methods. Other people might have found a shady and comfortable spot easier to think in, but Jerry always took his problems for a shoot. Not a serious shoot, for that needs all the concentration possible, but a casual stroll with the rifle. It was, however, evening before he set out, as the heat of the scorching afternoon sun was too great even for his impatience.

"Shol, old man, what's the difference between

a murderer and any other trader who has passed along the road?"

They were still within the village with its numerous smells, and Shol looked bored, finding no scents that meant excitement.

"We can't go much on the murder itself. Bloodstains and guilty consciences are better clues in detective stories than they are out here. Hey, you're not listening!"

Shol pricked up his ears and grinned.

"That's better. I told Dad that you were going to help, so you're jolly well going to." Shol waved an eloquent tail. "Now listen. We're left with the stealing part to work from. The thief will have a lot more money than usual, and lots more than other people have. Now what do we deduce from that?"

They were through the outskirts of the village, and cultivation had given way to bush. The boy saw that if he wanted attention from his audience he would have to hurry. Shol, his tail wagging, already awaited orders while his gaze wandered from right to left.

"Well, my dear Watson, we get two clues. The man, with more money than usual, will be spend-

ing pretty freely. He'll give higher prices for things than other people will. He won't stop to bargain much because money won't seem to matter. Get that? He may even be buying so much that he'll have to get other men to carry for him." He wiped the perspiration from his eyes and looked to see if there was a round in the chamber.

"And lastly, or whatever they say . . . since the murderer has more money than other folks . . . let's see, alloy shillings weigh a lot—yes, I've got it . . . he's going to have a load of money that will be lots heavier and more compact than other loads that people carry around. *Hurray!* that's got it!" He pulled Shol's waving tail. "Now how about a shoot?"

The shoot was a brief one. As soon as they had left the track Shol put up an oribi. Jerry shot it on the run, and it was plenty for the pot, or at least all Jerry could carry. He tied its legs with some bark and swung the meat to his shoulder.

Then he let out a yell that startled the dog, who turned to see what was wrong. It was only an inspiration. "Shol, you grinning old gorilla.

Here's the money we need, right on my shoulder. We'll have it toasted on skillets and sold in the market. Gofo can do that. Now, if Dad'll give his permission, we're all set for the best adventure we've ever had. And whenever we need more money we can just go out and shoot it."

As the two passed the dyepits where the fires of waste indigo gleamed through the dusk, a dusty figure rose and limped stiffly towards them. Gofo, footsore after thirty miles of hurried travel, had been waiting for them. Now he insisted on carrying the meat. The little procession passed through the town, exchanging greetings with people who sat comfortably in their doors to enjoy the coolness of the evening air. Jerry first, outlining his scheme as he went; then Shol, who turned his head from time to time to see that nothing had happened to the oribi; then Gofo, carrying the oribi on his head.

It was only as they turned into the marketplace, and the native boy set down his load, that Jerry saw that the party had increased to four—something like a dog had joined them; yet, even in the gloom, not quite a dog. Gofo noticed Jerry's look of inquiry.

"Behold! Since four are better than three if we are to take murderers and place fetters upon them, I have brought with me Yis, who is very brave." He made a soft, cooing sound and the object advanced. "And of great intelligence. Behold!"

Scarcely smaller than Shol, into the firelight came a huge white billy-goat. Jerry scratched it between the horns by way of greeting, as he bent to hide a smile.

It was the next morning. An old native woman, wrinkled with age, yet with fierce eyes and a high-bridged nose better suited to a warrior than a washerwoman, squatted before Mr. McLeod.

He had had a wide range of cases that morning, everything from an old woman's hen, which had been bewitched by a neighbor, to a request that Government do something about the sowing rains, long overdue; and his nerves and temper had been sorely tried. Besides, he was worried about Jerry. The boy had gone for a shoot the previous morning and there had come no news of him. Higher officials, too, were pressing for

the detection and arrest of an unknown man, probably a native of Ijebu Ode, who had been passing large quantities of counterfeit coins.

This man was thought, on no grounds that McLeod could see, to have reached his Division. Goaded by his superiors and more worried about Jerry than he wished to admit, he tapped impatiently on the table with his pen and tried once more to bring the old woman back to the point of her story.

"And so, O Nanek," he said, "many times have you told me that Gofo, your grandson, and Yis, your favorite goat, have been gone from your house since yesterday. If you wish them brought back, tell me where I may have them sought, or at least some sign whereby they or their path may be known. For there are many paths in this country. Nor are goats and small boys so scarce that strangers will exclaim, 'Lo, there must be the goat and the grandson of old Nanek.' " He tilted back his chair and hitched up the knees of his spotless white trousers with sun-tanned hands.

The old woman smoothed down the outer and less scanty of her two robes. It looked sus-

piciously like a one-time curtain from the McLeods' house.

"What should I say to you, O Whiteman? My grandson is well known to you, and as for my big white goat, there is no other like him in the country! None can mistake him. When he was young . . . of perhaps three months . . . no, it must have been six . . . or was it four? The rains were early that year . . ."

There was a muffled sound of exasperation from the office chair. Then, more clearly, "Woman, O woman, tell me but what road they have taken, or what village they have set out for. Only delay not, for I am tempted to murder, and you know that such is not my custom before midday!"

"How should I know their road?" Nanek's voice had scarcely the tones of a suppliant. She was enjoying what she had come for—a heated argument, and this Whiteman could give back sharp retort. She craned forward, her toes clasping the ground in her excitement. "Gofo, the useless child of my useless daughter, came to me from Manok market, came empty-handed, forgetting the errand on which I had sent him.

Only he brought a paper from your son which he asked me to give to you. A paper with writings on it such as the Whitemen make."

The chair came down on its forelegs with a crash. McLeod stretched out his hand. "Give me then the paper."

"There is no paper. I laid it on the woven grass cover of a dish. For Gofo was already gone down the path and there were certain things I wished to say to him."

McLeod smiled. He knew what sort of things she went to the door to yell after Gofo.

"But when I turned round, both lid and paper were gone. I called to Yis the goat . . . he was already cantering to catch up with Gofo. I called and he turned his head to show the white paper in his mouth. I called again and ran after them. Gofo must have heard, for he began to sing loudly and to run."

McLeod stood up. "Messenger!" he called, and a turbaned, white-robed native entered. "Have horses saddled. In ten minutes we start for Manok."

THE WRONG SOLUTION

CHAPTER XIV

THE WRONG SOLUTION

JERRY sat up and looked around him, then rubbed his eyes to get them open. Gofo lay on the opposite side of the small hut. Between them were a small pile of ashes and some stumps of charred stick. The Browning had gone to bed with Jerry, beneath the red-striped blanket. And the sun-helmet, as soon as he had learned to keep his ear off the knob of the crown, had made a

fair sort of pillow. But the blanket had not been enough to keep him warm or to relieve the hardness of the beaten mud floor.

He was stiff and cold and miserable, and he almost wished he had never started on this adventure. Yesterday it had all seemed so simple. But so far his infallible clues hadn't led anywhere at all. Gofo had grilled the meat and sold it while Jerry had wandered off to get into talk with placid groups of traders taking their ease in open doorways. But to his aimless question no one could give news of a man who might answer either of his two tests for the murder.

Now he turned over on his side and pulled the blanket up again. But that side was as sore as the other. What a fool he'd been not to go home, see Dad and explain! He'd get into trouble, he knew, for staying away like this without permission. It might mean being sent away to school, where you couldn't get shooting, where people spoke nothing but English, and where adventures were rare, if indeed they ever happened at all.

What was worse, a few careful questions just before he had gone to sleep had more than half

convinced Jerry that Gofo had never delivered that letter; in which case Mother and Dad would be worried almost sick about him.

Suddenly Shol, who had been standing in the doorway to sniff the morning air, sidestepped to let something past. Yis, at split gallop, drove through the opening, cleared Jerry and landed with all four sharp hoofs on Gofo; then turned to meet the enemy behind him, a handful of lean and miserable village dogs. But they had already seen Shol. Spraddle-legged, they put on four-wheel brakes and slithered through the dust almost up to the big dog's disdainful nose. Then, yelping their fright at this strange enormous animal, they turned in the cloud of dust they had stirred and made off towards the market.

Thinking the roof had fallen on him, Gofo tried to sit up, but Yis was too heavy. He had been lying on his back and the goat had landed full in his wind. So now when he tried to yell he produced only a weird gurgle. Jerry rocked with laughter and forgot his sorrows. As Gofo began to get his breath he lost somewhat his first look of horror. Still he couldn't get up, nor even sit up. Every time he gave a heave, Yis would

grunt, but stand stolidly, his eyes on the door for the return of his foe.

"Shehu!" cursed Gofo. *"Dan Hadio!"* and called on Jerry to help. But Yis did not care, and Jerry was now so weak from laughter that he couldn't have helped much even if he had wanted to.

At last he got up and, wiping his eyes, prepared to give aid by shoving the goat off his rebellious perch. But Gofo had had a better idea. Rolling ought to do the trick. So he rolled.

But there is no animal more sure of foot than a goat, and as Gofo rolled all Yis did was shift his feet a little, as a performing dog does on a barrel.

Jerry gave up any further attempt to help. Sinking down on the ground again he held his sides. A choking sound was all the laughter he had left. Wildly Gofo rolled about the floor, and without any apparent effort the goat kept his foothold, his long, solemn face ever turned towards the doorway, his long beard wagging while he chewed meditatively on something in the corner of his mouth. At last he seemed to have fully decided that his pursuers had gone. Sedately he stepped down from his point of vantage, mincingly walked to the door, and out.

Later they stopped for their early morning wash and drink at a rocky stream a mile south of the village. Gofo and Shol went downstream a few paces; Jerry stood alone on a little rock over the water. He put aside his rifle and bent forward, balancing on the edge of the stream to make a cup of his hands for drinking. There was a sudden drumming of hoofs behind him. Swiftly he flung himself sideways and flat on the

ground. There had been no time for thought and he acted instinctively. Something plunged over him and disappeared in a cloud of spray.

As Jerry sat up and looked around, a bedraggled goat scrambled out on to a rock and, with a chagrined *mee-yah,* stood draining itself off like a wet dish cloth. The goat's little jest had brought him a morning bath which he did not relish. Jerry had to find another drinking pool farther upstream, but for the rest of the morning the effect on the goat was excellent. A better-behaved animal never went man-hunting with two boys and a dog.

As Jerry swung along through the heat of the late morning only one thing really worried him. He had already left his father's Division, and in Wasé he would be in the headquarters of Simpkins, where he couldn't possibly pass unnoticed. There he'd have to account for his presence somehow, or—awful thought—be sent back by the detestable Simpkins like a small boy playing hooky.

Neither Jerry nor Gofo carried useless weight and the only rest they took was incidental. When they sat down to meals, or when they fell asleep

at night, Jerry was far too excited to eat, and a native eats only towards sundown. So they just plodded on. About four o'clock, when they had ploughed through the dusty outskirts of Wasé and reached the market, they must have covered all of thirty miles.

Where the road opened into the market square they halted and gazed around, a grimy but resolute group. Jerry's light skin showed the effect of two nights and a day away from home and soap. His bare legs and face and arms were streaked with black and rusty brown, and his clothes powdered to a brownish gray. The grime on Gofo's brown-black skin, where sweat had not washed it off, had turned him the color of old ashes. But when Yis and Shol caught up with their masters and stood in line, watching the busy market scene, the standard of beauty for the group was raised somewhat. Then, with Jerry again in the lead, red-striped blanket over one arm and rifle trailed in right hand, they wound their way through the packed and moving crowd.

"Here are so many people," said Jerry, "that among them there must be someone with news

of the man we seek. But first," he added, "we will greet whoever is in authority."

A wise move, for to neglect the usual formality of salutation would have excited comment. And Jerry wished to avoid that. Also, market chiefs are reservoirs of gossip of the current traders and the movements of people, transport and goods.

The boy left Gofo, Yis and Shol behind him and made his way through the circle of cronies and courtiers that surrounded the Market Chief. That wise old trader did not prove a disappointment. The formality of salutation once cleared away, Jerry's questions were answered clearly and without question.

"Yes," said the trader. "There is such a one as you seek. Ten helpers has he taken from this town to carry his purchases, and he buys without care for the price of the goods. This is good for the trade of those that sell, but it is angering other buyers, to whom money is indeed money and not as sand from the river-bed. Even now these men," he waved a brown hand heavy with alloy rings about the circle, "ask that I should drive him out, so that trade shall not be killed."

Then Yis gave a sudden wrench which shook the chair.

Dan Baki sprang up.

Several of the men nodded assent.

"He is here then, the one I seek." Jerry, in spite of his fatigue, could have danced with eagerness. "What is his name? Whence comes he?"

"His name we cannot say," replied the old native. "It is in one of those speeches of the south. But we call him Dan Baki, for he is very dark of skin. But see, he is here himself to answer your questions."

Jerry paused only to drop the blanket, which he feared might be recognized, and turned towards the place indicated.

"Magnificent!" he murmured to himself. "Incredible!" Only in a crisis

like this did he use both his favorite words at once. "Incredible! Magnificent!" And then, "Oh, gummy green Eliza, if it's only true!"

Gofo had got there first. He stood outside a stall that was hemmed in with bundles of corn, dried red peppers, peanuts and other produce; here he was vaguely and dreamily watching a stout trader, who stared suspiciously back at him from his shiny new deck chair on the farther side of the barricade. At the other side of the stall, behind Dan Baki's broad back, Yis nibbled at a small, heavy-looking bundle beneath the chair. Even a civilized goat can manage an old pair of boots, and to a goat the stout cord and leather wrappings of the bundle presented no difficulty. He had possibly learned by experience that the best food comes more firmly fastened up.

Jerry, too, stood watching, fascinated. Now and then the goat would pause in his nibbles to give a trial tug, while all the time the owner, secure in his belief that all was well, sat in his chair above the bundle.

Then Yis gave a sudden wrench which shook the chair. Dan Baki uttered an oath and sprang

up . . . just too late. Yis, his feet firmly planted on the chair for leverage, exerted one final burst of strength, and the bag burst. A cascade of alloy shillings rolled and clinked over the cement floor of the stall, some escaping merrily to twirl, brightly sparkling, in the sunlight down the trodden pathway towards Jerry's feet.

Dan Baki swung around towards the goat to prevent further damage. He had only the length of his chair to go, but Shol was swifter. A second before, he had been out of sight—at any rate Jerry had not seen him. Now, with teeth bared in warning, he stood between his new-found bearded friend and the angry trader.

As Jerry saw Dan Baki's hand wrench at the sword-knot that holds the blade in the sheath, he too sprang into the fray, and the muzzle of his .320 pressed into the trader's stomach in warning as the naked weapon shone above Jerry's head.

Simpkins' strident voice rose and fell in a mixture of English and an execrable imitation of the native tongue. Jerry, standing before the office table, felt wretchedly ashamed of having

given him this opening, and furious at the way the man had taken advantage of it.

"And so you come meddling in my Division —*mine,* do you hear?" He shouted a little louder to emphasize the word. "And after a disgraceful scene in *my* market, you persuade my foolish native authorities to arrest a perfectly harmless trader!"

Dan Baki, the "perfectly harmless trader," stood grinning his triumph. Sarakin Kasuwa, the Market Chief, and his friends, expressionless as to face, sat in disapproving silence. Politeness being the rule in their warrior race, their sympathy was with Jerry and not with the angry Simpkins or the soft-bodied southerner. But there was nothing they could do.

Simpkins stormed on. "Your only evidence was that the man had money."

A small heap of the shillings collected from the floor of the trader's stall lay on the desk in front of them. The Whiteman began to stack it in yellow, gleaming piles with fidgeting fingers.

"And that he was spending money freely, that he was a stranger with only local men to help

him in his trading. If, in addition to this, he *had* committed a murder, then I agree—he would have been a murderer. But he did not murder. Audu Zaria the deceased was never killed, never robbed even. He came through here yesterday on his way back to Railhead." He looked around the circle of villagers. "As to these fools who listened to you . . ."

"They did their duty, Mr. Simpkins." Jerry could put up with this lecture for himself, but he saw no reason why others should be blamed. "If a Whiteman charges a native with an offence and there are grounds for suspicion—"

"That's enough, Jerry! Do you think you can teach me my work?" Simpkins' sneer would have been more effective if there had been less shrill anger behind it. "I can see your father's hand in this. Unable to run his own Division, he interferes in mine. I shall of course report to Higher Authority."

A shadow, unnoticed by Simpkins, had darkened the door.

"May I come in, Simpkins? I gather I'm involved in this affair. Good morning, Jerry."

With a jingle of spurs McLeod walked to the

desk and stood with one hand fingering the money there.

"Sorry that Jerry seems to have made a bit of a mistake. I've heard all about it on the way up. Murder charge without a corpse, eh?" He grinned cheerfully around.

Jerry felt more comfortable and the natives relaxed their sternness.

"Audu Zaria seems to have been very careless with his belongings. But he had a bad touch of fever and didn't care what he dropped except the money in his care." Aimlessly he turned over a shilling and examined it; then another.

Jerry gulped miserably. It wouldn't have been so bad if he could have kept Dad out of it. But now he had put his father at the mercy of this jeering Simpkins.

"I don't know what you are doing here, McLeod, or why you interfere outside your area, but you shall hear more of it, believe me. If you think I need your help. . . ." Simpkins, already dangerously red as to face, was working himself into further fury.

"But I do think so. Pardon me, won't you, Simpkins? For instance, in this little matter of

counterfeit coins which we've been hearing so much about lately—" McLeod was still idly turning over the coins on the table. He now held up a handful before the other's eyes. "The leaves on the palm tree—slightly blurred. A little flaw in the lettering—the same on all of them."

Simpkins, losing some of the hearty flush of anger, let his mouth open slightly, then wider.

McLeod's calm voice went on. "The man that Jerry has arrested for you had some hundred-odd pounds of this money in his possession."

The grinning southerner had lost his grin. He made a swift dash for the door, to escape, but the *dogeri* firmly brought him back.

Quietly the voice continued. "There is a reward out for the capture of this man, you know. Well, you can make out the Government check for it either to Jerry or to me. We've both helped you, I think, and we'd like the fifty pounds. And now, Jerry, shall we say goodbye to Mr. Simpkins?"

Outside Shol waited, grinning. Gofo, too, wore a broad grin, though his left ear was in the grasp of a determined-looking woman. Yis seemed happy; as yet undetected, he was making

what seemed a satisfying meal off the corner of Nanek's skirt.

To Jerry in Africa, money was as useless as pearls to a castaway on a desert island. But . . .

"Dad, is that fifty pounds really coming to me?"

Dad, puzzled by the eager tone, looked round and nodded.

"Then if I could only manage to get some more Government rewards, I might be able to go to your old school after all. It isn't possible, I suppose . . . but, oh, Dad, wouldn't it be fine!"

THE MAKING OF NEW FIRE

CHAPTER XV

THE MAKING OF NEW FIRE

GRIPPING with hands and both bare feet, Jerry lowered himself from boulder to boulder. Somewhere far above him a spot of light showed faintly for a moment. Then it was lost as he worked his way around and then under a huge rock. The light had been the last faint trace of the blazing African sunshine. Somewhere far up there Shol crouched, guarding his master's rifle, shoes, shirt and sun-helmet.

One hand slipped its hold. Jerry shivered as the roar of the subterranean stream came for a moment from the darkness far below him. Bracing his back against a rock he freed one hand to switch on the electric torch which hung by a leather bootlace from the belt of his shorts. The light was somehow comforting. All around were the rough gray granite sides of huge boulders, which in some past geological age must have fallen into this upland valley of the Wilderim Mountains. There they lay jumbled together like lumps of sugar in a bowl, but each the size of a large house.

Suddenly Jerry heard a call from Ngyikh; below and a little to the left it sounded. Thrilled, excited, curious all at once, he snapped out his electric torch and followed down through this chaotic maze of rocks, the secret stronghold of the tribe.

Along one bank of the subterranean stream ran a paved causeway, which, in complete darkness, wound around and under the giant boulders. On both sides, wherever a rock had given a large enough smooth surface, there were rough drawings in red ochre, unfaded through

the ages they had been there. Jerry noted a hand, a lizard, and certain other signs that he had not been able to make out on his previous visit here. But the oldest ones—the crudest of all—were coated with a thick covering of soot from the torches; these had been originally etched or graven shallowly in the stone.

When he had climbed down before, he had been in the company of Wilderim boys who carried friendly torches. In the light of these Jerry had made copies, with brush and paint, of many of the drawings; and with tissue paper and cobbler's wax had taken rubbings of the older, incised designs. But now, as he scrambled after the old priest, there were no lights, no torches. For more than a week no fire of any sort had burned in any of the Wilderim villages; no smoke, not even tobacco smoke, had been seen. It was this that had aroused his curiosity and had led to the present expedition.

He stopped for a moment, out of breath and with shaking knees. With the back of his hand he wiped the stinging perspiration from his eyes. He had no shirt to wipe it with, for he was as bare above his shorts as below them. Slung by a

couple of handkerchiefs around his neck hung a Number 2 Brownie camera, nearly under his chin, so as to be out of the way. And balancing the flashlight that hung at his belt was a strange weapon; strange, and even unique: nothing less than a stone axe, such as was carried by Neolithic hunters many thousands of years ago. Its haft of heavy, iron-like wood, polished smooth by many hands, was new, probably not more than fifty years old; the rawhide lashings of the head were newer still—put on this year, in fact. Jerry had seen them put on wet, hammered flat with a wooden mallet as they dried, and coated with a hard-drying tree-resin which was then smoked dry over a fire and polished.

But old—old beyond anything he could imagine—was the stone axe-head itself. Shaped like a pear which had been flattened sideways, the stalk end was rough and pitted, to grip the lashings and the socket in the haft. The other end, flattened to a true axe edge, had been ground and polished till it looked like jet and would almost sharpen a pencil, as Jerry—who had tried it—knew.

He remembered, as he scrambled down after

Ngyikh, that, when he had first noticed the lack of fire among the Wilderim people, he had thought they were preparing for war. That might seem absurd, in this day of the White-man's rule; and yet they had been straightening arrow shafts and repointing them. Then he had seen that the iron heads were being replaced by hardwood points, a procedure difficult to understand. Iron-headed hunting hatchets were put aside and, to Jerry's amazement, the Elders of the tribe had begun to carry, like badges of rank, stone-headed axes like the one he now wore. No iron of any kind was carried; not even in the small knives used for eating.

This had not been all. His curiosity aroused, Jerry spent day after day in the Wilderim village. Men whom he knew well began to appear with ornamental designs like tattooing in red over their chests and backs. Down on the threshing floor behind the village Jerry had stumbled on the artist at work, his subject stretched out on the ground before him. He worked with both hands at once, producing balanced designs, the one side the perfect reverse of the other; while friends of the human canvas sat around com-

menting and pointing, but with awe in their subdued tones and repressed gestures.

It was this awe that had first given Jerry his clue. If these strange happenings had religious significance it would be useless to question the ordinary villager. Straightway he sought out his friend, Ngyikh, the Chief Priest.

Now Jerry switched on his light again. As he had guessed, he was standing on the underground causeway. There was the smell of damp, and the beam of light in the darkness showed that Ngyikh awaited him at the end of the way. Beyond, he knew, was the stream, deep, silent and slow, though not a ripple of light was reflected back from its smooth black surface.

"O man of few years, none but those of the Wilderim race have ever come before you, even so far as this." The old man pointed up and down the causeway with its smoke-stained roof and clustered drawings. Though the place had lost for him its first effect of novelty, it still gave Jerry a creepy thrill. In spite of the chill dampness, perspiration ran down his bare chest, and the words of the old one boomed and echoed eerily back from across the water. The vulcanite

of Jerry's flashlight and the fibroid of his camera gave forth a pleasantly modern smell that was somehow reassuring in this strange and ancient place.

"But the way is not so safe, if you would see the Making of New Fire, which comes once only in each generation and which only the head of each family may witness." The priest turned as he spoke, a gaunt, weird figure in the beam of the flashlight; and Jerry, following his glance, looked out over the black stream. At first he could see nothing. Then, as his eyes took up the correct focus, he picked out a gray line of sticks, bound end to end, afloat on the surface of the stream and stretching out into the darkness.

"Once, perhaps, in the days of our ancestors, or of our ancestors' ancestors, there was a bridge." Ngyikh, as he spoke, was making up a little bundle of something which he fastened on the top of his head. "There remain still some timbers, and some stonework skilfully built, such as no man of this day could construct. But the art died, as all things die in many, many years; or perhaps the work was destroyed by those who feared that it might reveal our mysteries."

Carefully and somewhat stiffly the Chief Priest let himself down over the edge of the stone causeway and emerged laboriously into the stream. His head with its package bobbed as the floating wooden guide rose and sank under his hands.

For a moment Jerry hesitated. There was a nasty, wobbly feeling in his inside that he knew was just plain fear. That wouldn't do, not for a minute. Feelings of that sort grew if you yielded to them. He hid his flashlight in a gap between two rocks where he could find it again on his return. Then in the dark, with rather shaky fingers he made a bundle for his head, of the camera and the few things from his pockets, and lowered himself into the water.

"Ouch!" The cold water came up to his chin and he gripped the floating guide rail with both hands. The cold caught his breath and he held on, gasping.

Then in the darkness he felt the touch of an ancient, friendly hand. "Fear not! The waters of Wilderim will not harm a friend of the Wilderim. Follow me."

Hand over hand, Jerry worked his way along

the bar. The current wasn't strong, but darkness and cold made the passage difficult. After a long time the guide bar stopped curving downstream with the current and began to show a bend upstream again. Jerry cheered up then; this must mean that he had passed the middle. But the worst was really in front of him, since the remaining half involved working against the force of the stream.

The last of his strength might not have been enough for him to pull himself out of the water. At any rate, as the anxious old priest half lifted, half dragged him to a rocky shelf, he felt like a cat that has been all but frozen and drowned.

"Rest awhile. The remainder of the path is smooth, and there is no great need for haste."

Jerry reached out a hand to feel about him. The rock behind seemed to stretch level from where he sat. In front of him he could hear the drip-drip of the water as it drained from his body back into the silent stream. Cold, still a little dizzy, he stood up, took off his shorts and wrung them out. They didn't feel much warmer as he put them on again, but they would dry quicker.

The priest's voice rose again at his side. "On this side is no road, only this hole in the rock. When the New Fire has been given to the people, then for the space of a generation no one will take this path. Our bridge . . ." Jerry smiled in the darkness as he thought of calling the crazy life-line a bridge . . . "will be cut behind us on our return. Moreover the rocks on this side are as black as darkness itself, so that none, even with the brightest of torches, can see them from the farther side."

The tunnel-like entrance seemed well known to the old man. While Jerry held one end of the stone axe, Ngyikh walked surely forward into the darkness, holding the other. By the echo from their almost silent footfalls the boy could tell that the passageway was narrow. At one place the old man called back, "Stoop!" and the other ducked his head for a few paces. Then suddenly he was conscious that their surroundings had changed. The tunnel had opened out into some larger space, and this space was tense with people who waited in dead silence. Whether they had come by another way, or had traveled in advance by the route he and Ngyikh

had taken, Jerry never knew—only that they were there, invisible, neither moving nor whispering.

A few more paces, which the old one covered with the same sure, unfaltering step, and they had arrived at what seemed their destination. A pressure of a hand on his shoulder signaled Jerry to sit down.

The voice of the Chief Priest rose deep and clear through the darkness. "O People of the Wilderim, sons of our ancestor Wilder, have you come to receive the New Fire?"

There was a murmured answer, the first sound they had made, from the invisible Elders.

"Are you all males, the heads of families, not the sons of living fathers, and of the true descent?"

"Yes!" The answer rolled around the assembly.

"Have you kept the fast of the New Fire, abstaining from all cooked food? Are all your houses and the houses of your stock free from fire and embers?"

Again the answer: "*Nok* . . . yes!"

"For the last time," the stern tones of the

Chief Priest demanded, "are you armed as your forefathers were armed, dressed as your fathers were dressed? Are your houses and the houses of your stock free from the taint of the iron which your forefathers knew not, and which their spirits hate?"

"No-o-ok!" the answer boomed forth.

Silence fell again. Behind him Jerry could hear an occasional slight rustle as an ancient changed the position of overcramped legs. In front of him and on the level of the ground there was a small sound that he couldn't identify, half squeak, half scrape. For what seemed hours, but was probably less than five minutes, he racked his brain to connect the sound with anything he had ever seen. Then came a smell he knew.

Scorching wood! A faint, acrid smoke drifted under his nose.

"O Wilder, give fire that thy people may eat, and be warm!" The Chief Priest spoke again. "Give light, that thy people may live, and see!" Anxiety and supplication were in his tones.

A point of red light began to appear in the darkness. The scraping, squeaky noise stopped. Jerry could see the nose and mouth of the priest,

red in the glow as he knelt and blew on the newborn fire. The outline of his face grew, picked out of the blackness by the red glare.

Chilled by the wet and oppressed by the gloom of the black cavern, the boy felt all his hopes, all his fears center in this weak, uncertain gleam—as though matches, electric light, and the hot tropical sun in the world outside had no existence. Admiration for the skilful, though unconscious, staging of the ceremony grew upon him. And how much more effective it must seem to those unfortunate Wilderim people, who had had no warm food and no fires during the chilly nights for over a week!

The light from the fire grew slowly with occasional flickers of flame as the punky tinder was fed with fine slivers of wood. Still Jerry could not take his eyes off it. Then there came a sound like the murmur of a breeze passing through the cavern. It was a sigh of relief from the watching Elders. The fire rose to a flaming pile higher than a native cooking fire. Jerry looked around the circle as the light grew warm and red, and noted the wide grins of relief from suspense.

With a snap his mind became again the mind of a white boy, and his attention was recalled to what was—for him—perhaps the main purpose of the expedition. At the moment he was so tense with the problem of how to work out his rather vague plan that the possible risk to himself, and the offence that it might give to his friends, hardly occurred to him. The immediate question was where to put his camera. He had hoped to find a shelf of rock somewhere near him, but there was none; true, over his head there was a crack, but it was just out of reach. However, it must somehow be made to serve the purpose.

With his handkerchief he tied the Brownie to his axe, and succeeded in wedging the axe into the cleft above him. He opened the shutter of the camera, having first steadied it as well as he could. Then, bending, he placed on the ground at his feet two sheets of flashlight paper, and touched them off with an ember that he snatched from the New Fire at a moment when its flickering flame had died down a little. So far, all his actions had remained unseen, because all the Elders were intent on the growing flames.

The magnesium flare blinded him for an instant.——

The magnesium flare blinded him for an instant; but almost automatically he rolled another exposure, twisted the camera in another direction, and lit another flare. Each time, the bright light shone out impressively in the dusky cavern. Six times he followed this procedure, hoping desperately that his camera had steadied itself after each exposure.

Then, as he drew a long breath after the sixth, the fanatic urge of the press-photographer left him, and he was once more a rather scared boy, with wits enough to wonder how the rest of the solemn assemblage might have taken this curious phenomenon.

"Oh, gummy green Eliza!" he exclaimed inwardly, "do you suppose I've wrecked the whole show? What possessed me to butt in on their most sacred ceremony?"

But his feeling of guilty horror subsided a little as he observed the expressions on the old men's faces. It was plainly evident that they had all seen the flares, but the looks that they turned towards the boy spoke only of wonder, of awed inquiry. Apparently, then, they were not of-

fended, but only astonished. Instantly Jerry determined to put their astonishment to good use. If they had no opinion of their own about his recent performance, he'd make their opinion for them!

He swung the axe upward in a dramatic gesture, and spoke, his young voice ringing through the cavern.

"O Sons of Wilder, hear me! You know me for your friend, who helped you when the Zantas threatened." At this there was a subdued murmur of approval which Jerry noted with rising hope. "As a friend I have come to try the New Fire. I *have* tried it, and it is good! Did ever any other fire, when young and weak, give birth to so great and bright a flame as that which I have six times kindled here? Speak, and give answer!"

No words were needed for reply—the Elders were already surging forward, each to light his primed and waiting torch at the New Fire. But Ngyikh, his eyes glittering, held them back with a wave of his staff. This had been a miracle, and the others must be made to see it as such; for, as the old priest well knew, in a primitive

religion one miracle is worth a whole bagful of ritual.

"Nay," he shouted. "Not in such unseemly haste may you kindle your torches. In due order must the seed of the New Fire be taken, my people—clan by clan, those of the Lizard Totem approaching first."

Plainly abashed, almost shamefaced as his fierce glance fell upon them, the Elders began to arrange themselves in rough groups according to clan and family. Jerry's eyes, meanwhile, were fixed on Ngyikh. Something further, he felt, was forming in that wise old mind.

"People of Wilder," the Chief Priest went on, "you have heard how bright was the fire in the days of Wilder. Now again, after many kindlings, you have seen its ancient brightness—such a brightness as must come from Wilder himself!" He paused briefly, to allow his statement to sink in, and to become the accepted interpretation of what they had witnessed.

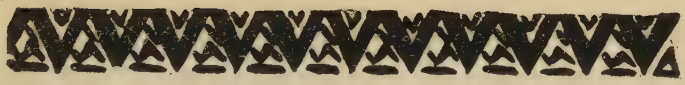
"Generation after generation of our people has been weak, even as our fire has been weak. We are few, we have become powerless, we have all but vanished. And I say to you that now that

our fire is strong again, we shall be strong. And mark that it is the Son of the Whiteman who has shown us the fire of Wilder. Behold, through him shall the people of Wilder rise again! Bring now your torches!"

Two hours later, when Jerry rejoined Shol and the heap of dry clothing that he was so glad to get into again, he reflected as he picked up his rifle that he felt he was no longer Jerry McLeod. As far as he could make out, he was a very different person—something like a reincarnation of the god-ancestor and name-hero of the Wilderim people. It certainly felt queer . . .

Shol, however, as he trotted at his master's heels seemed not to notice the difference.

THE GREAT ONE



CHAPTER XVI
THE GREAT ONE

THE weekly mail runner had arrived and Mr. McLeod was busy with the official correspondence. Methodically he slit the envelopes. He used a native dagger which in earlier, rougher days he had confiscated from the owner because that owner had used it to try to stab him in the stomach. With a small sigh of regret for

the days when he could get about among his people, and wasn't tied to an office by an avalanche of official letters, he continued to throw the envelopes into a basket, and stack the memoranda neatly in a tray.

Jerry, across the room, was busy again at his typewriter, tapping out one of his letters on "anthropology" to the correspondent whose interest had, in the past few months, proved so like his own. Several letters had passed between the two. The man Stuart's now reached Jerry direct, addressed in his father's care to "Dan Kado," the name that the boy had decided to use, feeling a bit shy of signing his real one. Stuart apparently lived—or was staying temporarily—at the large town not far off on the Coast which was the headquarters of the Governor of the colony; and his knowledge of the Zanta people had been considerably increased through the letters that Jerry had written him. Jerry, on his side, was gradually gathering from Mr. Stuart's letters a fairly systematic understanding of West Coast customs outside of his father's Division, and by this time was very keen on the correspondence. But some of these new words were certainly hard

to spell. He scratched his head and plugged on.

Presently his father threw across to him a sheet of memorandum.

"What d' you think of that, Jerry? Hydro-electric power scheme with a dam across the mouth of the Wilderim valley." At the word Wilderim Jerry sat up and reached eagerly for the paper. "Don't bother to read all that," his father went on. "But look at the sketch map at the end. Blenkinson produced it, I suppose. However much of a fool he was in some ways, his travels must have been pretty fruitful in information. And he seems to know all he needs to about rough surveying and leveling. Looks to me as though his 'anthropology' has been just a pretext to persuade them to let him into the country!"

Jerry was busy with the map. "Gummy! I say, Dad, if this thick blue line is the water level after the dam goes in, then the whole Wilderim valley will be swamped—fields, villages, and the underground way through the boulders. They certainly *can't* do that. The place has belonged to the Sons of Wilder pretty nearly for ever."

"They can and will, I'm afraid, unless we can show them a better place." Dad was already busy with another paper. "And even then they might want both of them. But here's another blow. The Governor and his Staff are visiting us on the seventeenth of next month. Don't know what he's coming to see, but it must be something special since we are so far off the beaten track. Considerate old cove, though. Listen to this: 'His Excellency and Staff will require no accommodation, as they will leave again the same day and will bring with them all they need. It is hoped that Mr. McLeod and Officers will lunch with His Excellency.' That saves us from having to get up a lunch for twenty people and having to send down country for stores and things."

Jerry was scarcely listening. It ought to be possible to find some way to let the Wilderim people keep their land. There was a valley just like theirs in the higher and almost inaccessible mountains to the east of them. Oh, golly, why hadn't he been to school and learnt enough so he could survey a little? Dad had the instruments, but he would be much too busy to use them.

And then the next day Morgan of the Langai bridge arrived in a lorry. He sat on the McLeod veranda drowning his sorrows in cup after cup of strong tea. Like a good host Jerry had seen to it that the tea was to his guest's taste. It was black and—as he decided after a cautious sip—capable of tanning a rhino hide, but apparently not strong enough to bring consolation to his square-set friend.

The Langai bridge was finished. It pleased even the critical single eye of Morgan, the foreman who had built it. His casual labor paid off, his skilled artisans transferred to other parts of the country, the piratical-looking old man had applied for local leave. Not that he had expected to get it. He had asked for it each tour, and each tour some job elsewhere had started to go wrong or had got behind schedule, and he had been sent for. Natives would walk a hundred miles to work under him and he was something of a genius in improvising tools and means out of local material.

But for once, it seemed, he could be spared. He now mopped his brow alternately and

looked in a bewildered manner at a wilted pink telegram which he had taken out and laid beside his teacup.

"Well, Jerry, it's my own fault for asking for leave, but who'd have thought they would give it to me?" The brick-red face looked anxiously to Jerry for a suggestion while the wrinkles of perplexity filled with perspiration. "At home, the missus makes me wear a stiff collar, and I sits in that and my heavy suit. It's none too comfortable, either. Sometimes we goes to the theater, but mostly I just waits for my boat out again." He mopped his face with a large green handkerchief, and Jerry hid a smile. "Out here I just works to pass the time, sort of, when I'm not eatin' or sleepin'. It wouldn't be right to work if I am on leave, or what would be the use of leave? I eats and sleeps all I want anyhow. What in 'eaven's name can I do?"

What was comedy to Jerry was real tragedy to the hard-working old foreman. Jerry helped himself to two chocolate biscuits from the slightly melted mass in a tin box on the tea table and shook his head at Shol, who had thumped his tail when he thought there was something

to eat being passed. He considered the case gravely.

"You've always wished you could come on a beef shoot?"

The old pirate nodded assent.

"Well, there's a well-watered mountain east of the Wilderim which ought to be stiff with game, but it is too far for me to go to unless I stay out there all night. But Dad would let us have tent and gear for a two-weeks' stay if he knew you were with me."

Jerry got up from his chair and stirred Shol with a prodding toe, then paced excitedly up and down as the plan took shape.

"It won't cost us a cent. Once I've told Ngyikh of something that I have in mind, the Wilderim people will be only too glad to carry our loads. We can shoot as much meat as we'll eat and can exchange the rest for food, or give it to the Wilderim carriers. In two weeks we may even get a leopard. I've got to go Home to school next month, and Dad is too busy to take a holiday with me."

The boy almost danced up and down the veranda. Shol plodding hopefully at his heels.

The round red face of his friend had lit up with excitement, then slowly grew dejected again.

"No, Jerry, it ain't no good. I couldn't do it. You see, it's this way, in a manner of speaking. Fifteen years ago I sees that people got to *take to* something." He emphasized the words with a glare from his glass eye. "Out here, I means. Some takes to drink, some to bullyin' the native, and some to other things. Well, I looks round and asks myself, 'What can I take to that I can always *get?*' There's the heat and the insects and the work, and that's about all you can depend on regular. Now insects and heat, you can't properly *take to* them. So I says to myself, 'Morgan, my lad, you've got to take to *work!*' And I does. See?"

Jerry put another chocolate in his mouth and licked his fingers, then shook his head. Morgan explained further.

"If you've taken to work for fifteen years, it's maybe like drink and things—you can't give it up, not for the whole of two weeks. No. I don't see myself enjoyin' a holiday—not a real holiday, as you might say."

"Wouldn't you call it work to survey rough

country? Steep country full of loose boulders and scrub in parts? Leveling and contouring as you went?"

Morgan rubbed his hard hands at the picture Jerry drew. "Ah!" said he. "That'd be fine work. Before I came to this country . . ."

"Well," said Jerry, "then let's go and borrow Dad's tent."

Dad was a stickler for old-fashioned etiquette, and so he went out to meet the Governor exactly on the boundary of the Division. Jerry had hurried back from his shoot with Morgan and was there to make all final arrangements for the Governor's formal reception at Headquarters.

The most trying task had been to order and marshal the Chiefs and their followers. Since dawn Jerry had been cantering up and down the road, spacing the crowds that lined the routes along which the Great One was to come. There was, for instance, the precedence of the chiefs to determine; the Son of the Whiteman found himself the arbiter between a dozen conflicting claims. One chief and his followers were posted far out on the road so that he might have the

honor of being the first to see the Great One. Another was satisfied by being so placed that he would be opposite where the car would stop when the Great One should actually alight. Another was persuaded that the place of greatest honor would be the center of the long line, and would have, when Jerry finished with him, fought if necessary with spear and knife to defend his position.

But even Jerry's ingenuity began to run dry after a time. Some of his inventions, he himself felt, were a bit thin.

"It is fitting that one of your greatness should have, as a background, a great wall, and not huts and emptiness," he explained to one rascally old despot as he stationed him under the tall, bare wall of the town prison. "Though," he murmured to himself in English, "you ought to be on the other side of it, really!"

In this primitive area, where there was no Suzerain Chief, the arrangements had been very difficult. As Jerry cantered back to the Council Chamber in the square opposite the Mosque, he hoped anxiously that no fool followers would start a private quarrel and so set ancient enemies

at each other's throats. With the exception of the alien Moslem settlers in this and a few other towns, all the people at this durbar were primitive and nervous pagans, hill people of the older tribes before the Mohammedans came. Their many tribes were all independent of each other, and until the coming of the Whiteman—not thirty years ago—had been hereditary enemies.

Shol had been left behind at the house, in deference to the Mohammedans, who believe that a dog is an unclean thing. As there wasn't the faintest hope for a shoot, Jerry was for once without a rifle. What made him still more difficult to recognize was his spotless cream-colored jodhpore breeches and white linen jacket, topped by a gleaming white sun-helmet; he wasn't going to be the one shabby spot in this scene of pomp and ceremony! But as he slid off his horse and strode into the shady archway of the courthouse he lifted the hat and mopped a streaming brow. He'd certainly be glad to get back into more comfortable clothes.

Morgan, just as strange-looking in his khaki field-service dress, met him at the door.

"I've had the three best office tables brought along and lots of chairs," he said. Jerry eyed

enviously the row of war medals and the green tie of the Colonial Service as the old pirate continued, "There are four new water-coolers in the veranda, and I've fixed up washing things for them in the witnesses' waiting-room. That ought . . ." But a murmur that rose to a roar of many voices made them both hurriedly clap on their sun-helmets and dash out again into the glaring sunlight.

In a white court uniform, sword at side, McLeod stepped out of the Governor's gorgeous car. A wild native roar from the crowd, and then a still louder burst as he was followed by a second man who topped Dad's six feet of height by easy inches. Jerry himself almost cheered at the imposing vision: blue uniform half covered with gold braid; two rows of medals on the broad chest; long, gold-hilted sword; even a blue cocked hat with a white plume. Gummy green Eliza, how that man would impress the natives! If you *had* to have ceremonial, this was the way to do it. Jerry remembered the last Great Visitor, who had been mistaken for his own motor driver and ushered politely but firmly into the backyard.

Between words of salutation to the chiefs, the Governor was talking to Dad. "I agree with you, McLeod. You're in a most interesting Division."

Jerry was near enough to see the pleasant smile on the worn face of the man who had spent thirty years in tropical administration.

"I wish I knew more of it. Fortunately I already know something of the Zanta and the Wilderim tribes."

A surprised expression came over Dad's face, and Jerry felt a bit puzzled too. What could have made the Governor read up about those particular tribes? Besides, there was almost nothing written about them.

"There's talk of a hydro-electric scheme in the Wilderim area that should have reached you by now. I should like to have a talk with some of the Wilderim Elders in any case, and at the same time we can find out what their feelings are about the water-power scheme—'still two curs with one bone,' as it were!" He smiled in deprecation of his mild jest.

At a sign from Dad, Morgan and Jerry came forward to be presented. Then two Albion trucks and several other cars came into the

square, and Jerry hurried off to direct them to their parking sites. Heads of departments and secretaries, clutching swords and brief-cases, climbed out and hurried after His Excellency. Jerry and the aide-de-camp, a cheery, youthful soldier fresh out from Home, were left to deal with native servants, cooks and motor drivers.

By the time the right loads had been unpacked and the wrong ones returned to the trucks, the A. D. C. had decided that somehow, and at the earliest opportunity, he must wangle a leave and go shooting with Jerry; while the pampered native servants, who had stripped themselves of the raiment of civilization, sweated and grinned in appreciation of the scorpion-tongued white boy, who seemed equally at home in the pungent wit of half a dozen native languages.

Before Jerry could get away, the formal part of the reception was over and the native chiefs had been presented and dismissed. Dad and the Great One were seated in chairs in the shade of a large tree. In front of them fidgeted a nervous group of the Wilderim Elders.

As though with the same thought Dad and

Ngyikh looked up, caught sight of Jerry and beckoned.

"I gather that the Wilderim are averse to the flooding of their valley, but I should like to know just how strongly they are opposed to the scheme, and whether compensation in money and lands will meet the case." The Governor turned to Jerry. "Could you find out?"

There was no need for Jerry to put the question. Assured of a friend who understood him, Ngyikh rose and, leaning on his staff, addressed them.

"O Son of the New Fire, speak to your Great Ones that they may know. To drown our village with this water is to drown our People. How can the New Fire come to each generation save from the cave of Wilder? How can the Fire of Wilder live, how can the offerings to Wilder, drawn on the rock by many generations of Wilderim people, have force, if both are to be buried beneath water, higher than the tallest tree?"

It was no nervous suppliant speaking now, but the voice of a People claiming its right to live. Jerry translated, the Governor nodding his

head in understanding. People had stopped fidgeting with sword-hilts and papers and were bending forward in their chairs, intently listening.

"Why, when Zanta spears killed nine out of ten of us, did we always return? There were hills beyond, where there is water and where no man goes. There were forests, too, where we would have been safe. When the Whiteman first came we sought to kill him, not understanding his ways and fearing he sought to enslave us. For death was better than to be taken from our hills."

Jerry interpreted word by word, so that nothing might be lost. The furrow between the Great One's eyes seemed to deepen.

The Chief Priest threw away his staff and at a sign from him the other Elders piled their spears in a heap and, unbuckling their knives, added these also. Ngyikh, looking directly at the Governor, strode forward and touched his sword-hilt.

"To drown the valley of Wilder is to kill the Sons of Wilder, and of what use to the dead are the money and the lands that you offer? You

have your swords. We are unarmed. Kill! If we must die it is better to die here. Then we shall not be shamed, and you can send your soldiers and guns to kill the women and the children and the young men."

Pride and anger were in the old man's voice. Despairingly he drew the sword of the Great Whiteman and laid it across his knee, then stepped back a pace and bent his head. Without motion or expression the world-famous administrator watched this primitive witch-doctor plead for the life of his almost unknown people, facing failure, admitting defeat. This was no acting. Ngyikh preferred death, and here and now awaited it, rather than return to his people with the news that their villages were doomed.

The Governor, perhaps the greatest Colonial Governor of modern times, knew men, white and black. Gently he put the sword back into its sheath, as one would take a sharp knife from a child. As it clicked home the old priest raised his head.

"There will be no killing," said the Governor gently. "No killing—either of you or of the people of Wilder. I understand. Go in peace!"

Slowly, as if dazed, the Wilderim Elders

gathered up their weapons. On their faces was the dumb look of gratitude and fear of an animal just released from a trap. Saved for the moment, but what was to follow?

The Governor turned to McLeod. "For a time, but for a time only, the scheme can be postponed. Here is a rich country, but without coal or oil. The clock cannot be put back indefinitely. In the end economic pressure will force through this hydro-electric scheme."

"Unless—" It was McLeod who spoke. He spread open a blue linen tracing of a sketch map and passed it to the Governor. "Unless a better scheme can be found."

"Hardly likely." A tired little man with thick-lensed spectacles leaned over and took the sketch map. "If Your Excellency permits?"

"Certainly. Take it and compare it with the Wilderim site and let me know within an hour how they compare. Facts, not opinions. You understand?" There was a quiet command in the tones that sent the Director of Works hurriedly to his task.

"And now, McLeod, if Ngyikh is not too much upset, I should like to ask him a little more

about his interesting tribe. I understand you have a missionary up there? Pity he didn't come down to meet me. He sends me much valuable information about the Wilderim customs." He called to his secretary and produced a pile of papers. At the sight of these, Jerry's face began slowly to turn a delicate pink.

"Missionary?" McLeod showed surprise. "We have no missionaries here, Your Excellency, and no whiteman lives among the Wilderim. A man named Blenkinson did once—"

"Ah—yes," the great man smiled. "I must hear your account of his visit, when we go to lunch. I'm sure there was a lot that didn't get into the official reports. But this man I refer to seems to be a foreigner, and not too well educated, to judge from his rather curious spelling. But, as you will see—here are some of his latest letters that I brought with me in the hope of meeting him personally—the man's an excellent student of native thought and custom." He passed the letters to Mr. McLeod. "Most of what I now know about these people comes from the information he has sent. You see he addresses me as Stuart—that's my family name.

Down here, of course, I'm known by my title only. But I still use the 'Stuart' for the stuff I write for the anthropology review. Do you know the man? 'Dan Kado' is his name. I've been sending my letters to him in your care."

How Jerry got through that dreadful moment of discovery without bolting, he never knew. But within five minutes his nervousness had gone, and he, Ngyikh, and the Great One were in earnest discussion of the lizard totem and Wilder. Within another five he was showing his stone axe and the six photographs of the ceremony of the New Fire.

Then came an interruption. The tired little man with the thick lenses was waving a paper almost under the Governor's nose. He seemed tired no longer, but on the verge of breaking into a dance.

"Your Excellency! Your Excellency!" Wildly he claimed attention. "This scheme here, which I understand has been drawn up by Morgan, a foreman of my department, is incredible—incredible!"

"Yes, yes?" His Excellency was clearly annoyed by the interruption. "What is it, man, what is it?"

"I've checked my computations carefully," replied the little man, pulling himself together with an effort, "and the results are clear. The new scheme is in an uninhabited area and therefore no question of either pollution or compensation can arise. Small matters, those. But, in addition, the plan gives double the fall, and over four times the catchment and the storage—in other words, eight times the water-power of even the Wilderim scheme. This will mean . . ."

"Tell Ngyikh that he and his people are safe for at least fifty years," was the message that the Governor promptly bade Jerry take to his Wilderim friends.

His Excellency turned again to the Chief of Works. "Take the scheme up on behalf of the Government. It is too big for a private company. Put Morgan in charge of the construction and give him promotion to fit."

By his father's orders Jerry saw Ngyikh on his way, the better to explain to him what had occurred. It was not until the end of lunch that the boy and his new-found friend had time to talk together again.

"I hear you're going home to school. Very wise.

Might write a book on the tribal customs of the Whiteman, his quaint forms of witchcraft and juju, the totem symbols on his wallpaper, those cave drawings in the National Gallery!" The Governor was clearly pleased with life and mildly jocose. "But get all you can of the despised 'liberal education.' Otherwise some learned professor who has never strayed out of his easy chair will take all the credit for your anthropological discoveries, while you do the work and feed the mosquitoes. Isn't that so, McLeod?"

Dad looked up. "Jerry doesn't mind so much now the thought of going Home. He's already planning to come back in the Service as soon as he's finished University."

"Coming back? Of course, you're coming back, Dan Kado! This country can't afford to lose its youngest and most promising administrator for long!"

The Staff were already in their cars and waiting when His Excellency drew Jerry and Dad aside, out of earshot.

"Hope you won't mind my butting in, McLeod. If there is any need of money for

Jerry's school or university fees, the young man has it right now in his own pocket."

The grave, tired face relaxed slightly at the puzzled silence, and the Governor went on: "Those photographs that Jerry has are virtually authentic records of a Stone Age ceremony, and worth at least a thousand pounds to any big newspaper. What is more, as the young man may have noticed, they show clearly some ancient and unknown writing on the rocks, around and over the paintings. If Dan Kado will still write to me, I'll give him an introduction to a friend of mine at Home who is the greatest authority in that line, and who will not steal the discovery. But don't trust anyone else!"

The Staff still waited. The Governor looked around with a sigh, and made his way regretfully to the car.

"Well, good-bye, McLeod. Good-bye, Dan Kado! And McLeod." The tired eyes twinkled. "I don't agree with you that yours is *an* interesting Division. It is *the most* interesting Division. Good luck!"

Dust rose and engines whined in acceleration as car after car moved off. Mr. McLeod and

Jerry were left. Jerry made a sign for his horse to be led after them, as he and his father turned to walk home. The events of the day took some sorting out. So much had happened.

"As you're going Home to school next month, Jerry, we'll have to cable. No time to write." Dad was clearly trying not to sound excited. He must mean . . . "We never cancelled your name on the waiting list of the old school. With this money that you're going to get from your photographs, and a bit more that I think we can squeeze out somehow . . . ."

"Oh, *Dad!* You mean I can go to your old school after all?"

"Hrrrumph!" Dad cleared his throat in a funny sort of way. "That's it, Jerry."